

# Monographs of the Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology

Editor :

*Professor A. K. NARAIN*

No. 3

## SKANDA-KĀRTTIKEYA

[A Study in the Origin and Development]

*By*

PRITHVI KUMAR AGRAWALA

BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY

VARANASI—5

1967

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*Published by*  
The Head of the Department,  
Ancient Indian History, Culture & Archaeology,  
Banaras Hindu University  
Varanasi

*First Edition 1967*

Price : Rupees Ten

*Printed by*  
R. K. BERRY  
at the  
Banaras Hindu University Press,  
Varanasi-5

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Some explain him as son of Pitāmaha,  
 Sanatkumāra, eldest born of Brahman ;  
 Some say he is son of Maheśvara ;  
 Some say he is son of Agni (Vibhāvasū) ;  
 Some say he is son of Umā ;  
 Some say he is son of the Kṛttikās (Pleiades) ;  
 Some say he is son of Gaṅgā.

*Mahābhārata* 9.46.98-9 (Bombay).

(केचिदेनं व्यवस्यन्ति पितामहसुतं प्रभुम् ।  
 सनत्कुमारं सर्वेषां ब्रह्मयोनिं तमग्रजम् ॥  
 केचिन्महेश्वरसुतं केचित्पुत्रं विभावसोः ।  
 उमायाः कृत्तिकानां च गङ्गायाश्च वदन्त्युत ॥)







## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The present work is a revised and enlarged form of the thesis entitled, "Skanda : A Study in the Origin and Growth," which was submitted for the M.A. Examination of the Banaras Hindu University in 1964. I acknowledge my thankfulness to the University authorities for permitting its publication and to the learned Editor of the series for very kindly including this work in the programme as No. III of the Series.

I am deeply grateful to my teacher, Professor A. K. Narain under whose advice the present study was taken up ; and to Dr. (now Professor) V. S. Pathak, the then Reader in the Ancient Indian History, Culture & A. Department, College of Indology, under whose guidance it was carried out to a completion. To my father, late Professor V. S. Agrawala, I owe a respectful obligation not only as the son, but also a desciple. The immense light and inspiration I derived from him are not subject of mere words. Whatever success I have achieved in the form of this study would not have been possible but for his spontaneous direction. His sudden death has left us in great bereavement, the only consolation being the magnitude of his scholarship bequeathed to us in the form of his writings and oral lessons.

We are indebted to Shri Charles Goodwin for the Text and English Translation of the *Skandayāga* or *Dhūrtakalpa*, which he published for the first time in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society, Proceedings*, May, 1890, pp. v-xiii ; and of which the Text only was later on collected in the *Atharva-Parīṣiṣṭa* by Shri G. M. Bolling and Shri J. Von Negelein (Leipzig, 1909-10).

For the accompanying plates, most of the illustrations are based on the Archaeological Survey of India photographs, to whom we express our indebtedness, excepting Pl. Nos. I, II, VIIIa, XIIIb, XIV-XVI, XIXa, and XXI-XXII. We are indebted for them to the British Museum, London (I-II, XIXa), National Museum, New Delhi (VIIIa), and the author of the *Gandharan Art in Pakistan* (New York, 1957 ; XIIIb, XIV-XVI). The outstanding Kārttikeya images seen on Pls. XXI-II are here reproduced through the kind courtesy of His Holiness Svāmī Praṇavānandajī Mahārāja, F.R.G.S., (of the Holy Kailās and Mānasarovar) to whose great Iconographic Surveys of the Kumaon region I take here opportunity of expressing my homage.



## INTRODUCTION

In the following pages, we propose to investigate the origin and growth of the god Skanda, known also by various other names like Kumāra, Kārttikeya, Guha, Ṣaṇamukha, (Su)brahmaṇya, Murugā, etc. For the sake of convenience and uniformity we have called him by the name Skanda in our discussions.

Though a clear history and antiquity of the cult of Skanda is almost shrouded in mystery, scholars have tried to trace his worship as early to the proto-historic period. On one of the seals of Mohenjo-daro, Father Heras read *Murugan adu*,<sup>1</sup> and that has been identified with Murugan, the ancient Dravidian name of Subrahmaṇya-Skanda. But unfortunately the script of the Indus Valley seals is not yet deciphered finally, and we are not in a position to believe in the above reading.

It has been attempted by other scholars in identifying Skanda depicted on certain seals from Indus Valley. With features of Paśupati and Naṭarāja noticed already by certain authors as not strange to or removed from Harappan culture, Aravamuthan has pointed out further evidence for the identification of a number of gods :

“Four seals found at Mohenjo-daro and one found at Harappa picture a significant scene. The fullest of these seals shows a god in an Aśvattha tree, presenting himself to a kneeling god, a severed human head on a stand between the two, a bull-goat-man behind the suppliant, and a group of seven women in the foreground. In the seals which are not so full the tree is the Aśvattha, but there are variations ; the group is of six women in the background, or the head is indistinct, or is even absent. Nonetheless, all these do picture one common scene.

“The bull-goat-man is Agni. The group which is both seven and six is that of the Kṛittikās. The suppliant, who is sponsored by both Agni and the Kṛittikās is Kārttikeya. The Aśvattha, growing both upward and downward, its roots above and its branches below (*Kāthopanishad*, 6.1.), and appropriately pictured both upright and inverted in the seals, is Brahman, and the god in these is Brahman. This god, having vanquished the demons revealed himself to Indra (*Kenopanishad*, 3.4) who is Kārttikeya, the head in the scene is a trophy

<sup>1</sup> F. Heras, *The Velas of Mohenjo-daro*, *New Indian Antiquary*, Vol. I, p. 52.



of Brahman's victory, and the scene is that of Brahman revealing himself to Kārttikeya, and instructing him in his Doctrines becomes Su-Brahmaṇya.<sup>1</sup>

We may collect here some objections to the ingenious theory of this scholar :

- (a) The scholar presupposes the scene as depicting the story of the *Kena Upaniṣad*. So he is compelled to identify Kārttikeya with Indra.
- (b) The god being portrayed as enshrined in the Aśvattha tree is the presiding deity of this tree. In all ancient cultures Aśvattha is the plant of sanctity. He can be well identified as the prototype of Brahman, but Sir John Marshall takes this deity, the epiphany of the Aśvattha tree not as a male but female figure.<sup>2</sup>
- (c) Seven or six figures in a row taken as Kṛttikās are the main basis to identify the presence of Kārttikeya. But their female character cannot be asserted.<sup>3</sup>
- (d) Kneeling suppliant figure can only be that of a votary. He should be taken as a human being, a king or priest, and not a divinity in person.
- (e) Until and unless some definite explanation of the matter through lucky decipherment of the Indus epigraphs comes forth, all this is a mere conjecture.

However, A. P. Karmarkar traced the word Murugā, the Tamilian name of the god, in the *R̥gveda* where he found the phrase *Mūradevāḥ*<sup>4</sup> used several times. But how far the same is correct is difficult to say.

These attempts by the various learned scholars, though inspired by some real research aptitude, are in no way profitable as is clear by the obscure nature of the material itself.

At some early stages in the study of Indian thought, a view was hazarded that Skanda was nothing but a sanskritisation of the name Alexander. But how fantastic is this frivolous statement we need not comment upon it. Skanda

<sup>1</sup> We have quoted here from the *Summary* of the long article entitled "Gods of Harappa" by T.G. Aravamuthan. It appeared in *J. Bihar Res. Soc.*, 1948, pp. 30ff.

<sup>2</sup> Marshall, J., *Mohenjo-daro And Indus Valley Civilisation*, Vol. I, p. 64.

<sup>3</sup> Sastri, K. N., *New Light on the Indus Oivilisation*, p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> RV. 7. 104. 24 ; 10. 87. 2 ; 10. 87. 14. Karmarkar, A.P., *The Vṛātya or Dravidian Systems*, Lonavala, 1950, p. 128.



is not an intruded deification of Alexander is again clear from the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* where he is identified with Sanatkumāra. The date of the *Upaniṣad* is unanimously regarded earlier than the Greek invader by several centuries.

Though the name Skanda is not found in the four ancientmost Vedic Saṁhitās, there are certain usages like *caskanda*, *skanna*, etc. which are to be connected with the same  $\sqrt{\text{skandir}}$  of the Pāṇinian *Dhātupāṭha* from which the word Skanda is often derived in later times.

It might have well been an Indo-Iranian root as in the *Avestā* there occurs a word *Skando*, which is translated by scholars as 'destruction' or 'perishing'.<sup>1</sup> Of course, the destructive nature of Skanda is manifest in the later tradition and literature, but there is hardly any link to connect that with the Avestan word.

But the word, whose authenticity can hardly be doubted, is Kumāra, which occurs several times in the *Rgveda* and other Vedic texts. We have found that though often it simply meant a 'boy or youth', yet whenever it is used in collocation with Agni its significance is much increased for our study. As we have shown in Chapter I there is hardly any doubt from the *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* evidence that Agni-Kumāra was the original Kumāra deity evolved in the Vedic tradition. And how he assimilated in his form various other divinities coming from different sources is somewhat an obscure chapter of Skanda study.

About the process of Skanda evolution, Hopkins remarked in his *Epic Mythology* :

"Skanda is a composite god. First there is Agni-Kumāra the 'ever youthful' with whom first Skanda was formally identified. On the other hand as son of Agni Skanda was identified with all burnings (fevers) and other afflictions. The god who represented fire and affliction was naturally associated with the troops of afflicting beings grouped about Śiva and so became 'son of Śiva'."<sup>2</sup>

As a result of our enquiry it appears that the conception of Skanda as we find it in the *Mahābhārata* and in archaeology was the outcome of a long evolution in which several streams of cults and folk-beliefs combined. One such tradition was that of the Graha-Devatās or soil-born demoniacal deities in which Skanda in association with the Mātrkās and other gnomes and ogresses

<sup>1</sup> Kābārdar, A.F., *New Light on the Gāthās of Holy Zarathushtra*, pp. 46, 265, 769 ; Taraporewala, I.J.S., *The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra*, p. 164.

<sup>2</sup> Hopkins, E. W., *Epic Mythology*, p. 229.



emerged as their chief. As already noted, the second stream was Vedic in which the conception of Kumāra as the Son of Agni and Rudra had quite early origin and expanded to assimilate several other strands until the two conceptions of Kumāra and Skanda became finally blended in one, but retaining their distinctive formulation.

A third stream of evolution, this is admissible into this discussion, is that of Skanda under the title of *Dhūrta* whose cult is mentioned in detail in the *Dhūrta-Kalpa Pariṣiṣṭa* of the *Atharvaveda*. This shows that Skanda was a malicious deity honoured by thieves and bandits, and criminal tribes or primitive Saṅgha peoples known as *Vrātas* or *Vrātyas* who mainly made their livelihood on violence (*āyudhajīvī*).

Still other strands which commingled with the main stream of Skanda worship were those of *Kārttikeya*, a constellar concept, of *Guha*, perhaps a hilly demon, of *Naigameya*, a deity of child-birth, etc.

The golden age of Skanda worship in the north was the classical period of Indian history and literature which came into existence during the Gupta period. Skanda was raised to the status of a national god and he attained a supreme position in the pantheon as known in the *Kumārasambhava* of *Kālidāsa* and *Purāṇas*, as well as from art and archaeology. The extensive evidence at our disposal shows the mythical personality of Skanda in a further complexed form which in the religious history of India reached its natural finale in the early medieval period. In northern India Skanda was now relegated to the position of an ancillary deity of the *Saiva* pantheon and lost all his ancient glory and independent veneration. It is often stated that his worship was transferred to the south. However, as we have shown in two of the last chapters, in southern areas, worship of *Murugan-Subrahmaṇya* had an ancient and in fact independent origin and evolution till in the period of the *Guptas* an acculturation of the north and the south was arrived at with fresh bearings in an identification of the *Skanda-Kārttikeya* of the north with the *Seyon-Murugan* of the south. It was well understood and a mutual give-and-take of various myths took place. While on one hand, in north India, Skanda was reduced to an insignificance in the medieval ages ; on the other hand in the country south of the *Vindhya*s the worship of *Subrahmaṇya* grew in importance and is still observed with supreme devotion and popularity, only perhaps equalled by *Śiva*. A study of Skanda cult in the *Tamil land* and *Ceylon* has not been attempted here by the present author and that quite justifiably falls outside the scope of this humble venture.



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## CHAPTER I

## VEDIC AND BRĀHMAṆA PERIOD

*Skanda in the R̥gveda :*

Although, the word Skanda does not occur in the *R̥gveda*, there are certain significant passages containing the germs of a few elements of mythology which could fully blossom only in later times in connection with the god Skanda.

The word 'Kumāra' is a name of Skanda in later literature.<sup>1</sup> In the *R̥gveda*, where it occurs seventeen times,<sup>2</sup> it mostly has the generic sense of 'a son, a child, or a youth'. In those cases, however, where it comes in collocation with Agni, it assumes some significance.

In the hymn 5.2, the word Kumāra occurs twice. Whether here the word Kumāra is a proper name cannot be fully ascertained. Still the context shows that it stands for Agni. The hymn opens with the description of Kumāra who is addressed by the name Agni in the seventh stanza. Sāyaṇa, the famous commentator of the *R̥gveda*, commenting on this sūkta holds that because in the *Sarvānukramaṇī* this sūkta is dedicated to Agni, the latter is called Kumāra.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Infra*, Ch. II.

<sup>2</sup> RV. 2.33.12 ; 4.15.7,8,9,10 ; 5.2.1,2 ; 5.78.9 ; 6.75.17 ; 8.30.1 ; 8.31.8 ; 8.69.14 ; 10.34.7 ; 10.79.3 ; 10.135.3,4,5. Usually it is translated as child, descendant, son, boy, youth etc. We have taken into our consideration only those passages where the word is used as a constant epithet used more or less as a proper name. As a proper name, it occurs in the RV. 4.15.7 ; 8;9;10. The *Sarvānukramaṇī* records certain other names as Kumāra Ātreya (seer of the RV. 5.2), Kumāra Āgneya (seer of the RV. 10.135), having Kumāra as their name. Amongst these, for our purpose, however, Kumāra Āgneya seems of much interest.

<sup>3</sup> Sāyaṇa on 5.2.1, *sūktasya āgneyatrāt kumāra ityagni rucyate* ; on 5.2.6, *taṁ kumāramagnim vā*. Modern scholars, like Wilson, Griffith, Geldner, etc., declare with one voice the *mantras* of this hymn 'extremely obscure' in meaning. However, they have tried to explain it as describing figuratively the kindling of the sacrificial fire. But a curious and strange legend has been cited by Sāyaṇa from the *Śātyāyana Brāhmaṇa*, *Tāṇḍya Brāhmaṇa*, and *Bṛhaddevatā* which has actually no real application to the meaning of the *mantra*. Perhaps it is Sāyaṇa's own fancy to connect the story with the hymn rendering the word *Peṣī* of the text as *Piśācī*, an ogress. However, see Wilson's notes on 5.2.1, *R̥gveda Translation*, Vol. III, pp. 38 off., Poona, 1926.



Here, Kumāra is described as 'cherished in secret (*guhā*) by his mother, who does not show him to his father. Lying upon the arm' (?), it is stated, 'Kumāra is seen by men'. The description continues in the form of riddles :

"Who as embryo increased through many autumns, and who, gold-toothed, bright coloured, is seen hurling his weapons, moves from place to place, etc."

Similarly in the tenth book, Kumāra is found associated with Agni. By way of a simile, Agni is compared with Kumāra inasmuch as both seek mother's secret (*guhā*) bosom.<sup>1</sup> The use of the word Kumāra for Agni, as in the hymn 5.2, and the words, Kumāra and Agni, occurring in collocation might have given in later times a basis for the mythology of Kumāra-Skanda, being the son of Agni. This may further indicate that the idea of Kumāra as a form or an aspect of Agni was in the process of development in the early Vedic age.

Kumāra as an independent deity appears in the hymn 10.135 also. Here he is associated with Yama, the divine king ruling the dead, who in the *Rgveda* itself, is sometimes identical with Agni, or is one of his forms.<sup>2</sup> According to the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*<sup>3</sup>, this hymn formed the basis of the *Nācīketasopākhyāna* which is the theme of the *Kātha U.* In the *Upaniṣad*, Naciketā, son of Vājaśravā<sup>4</sup>, is called Kumāra<sup>5</sup> and his close association with Agni is in the context worthy of our attention. We, therefore, give below an extract from this interesting hymn :

"The new chariot, wheelless, single-poled, but turning everywhere, which thou, my child, hast mentally formed--thou standest thereon though thou seest it not."

This points to the divine personality of Kumāra hedged from the very beginning in a mystic obscurity, as we see in the *mantras* using commonly the word *guhā*.<sup>6</sup> Here mystic speculations found their vent in such questions, 'Who knows him ? or, Who originated him ? Who made the chariot rollaway ?'

<sup>1</sup> RV. 10. 79.3.

<sup>2</sup> RV. 1.66.8 ; 1.164.46 ; see Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 173, and note 32 on p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> TB. 3.11.8.

<sup>4</sup> KU. 1.1.1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.1.2.

<sup>6</sup> RV. 5.2.1 ; 10.79.3.

<sup>7</sup> Dr. Sen in his article "Iranian Śraosha and Indian Skanda", which appeared in the *Indo-Iranica* (Vol. IV, No. 1, July, 1950, p. 27), also thinks that the Kumāra of the hymn 10.135 is a coun-



How the idea of Kumāra grew rapidly in later times becomes more clear in the *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* which we shall discuss a little later.

The authorship of the two hymns of the *Rgveda*<sup>1</sup> is ascribed in the *Sarvānukramaṇī* to one Āgneya Kumāra. It seems very much probable that this Kumāra Āgneya is the personification of the Kumāra aspect of Agni, the references to which from the *Rgveda* we have collected. Though the *Sarvānukra-*

terpart of Śraosha of Iranian mythology. This problem should be seen purely in the light of this hymn. Here we note following points:

- (i) Among the attributes of Śraosha an important place is given to his youthfulness. It is the youthful nature that is emphasised by the term Kumāra in the *Rgveda*.
- (ii) Śraosha is borne in a chariot drawn by four ruddy horses. Here in the hymn also we have a chariot, but of a peculiar type, wheelless, one-poled, mentally carved, and there is no mention of horses.
- (iii) Śraosha is also regarded as guiding souls. To this may be compared the association of Kumāra with Yama, the presiding deity of the dead.

(Coyajee, Sir J.C., *Cults and Legends of Ancient Iran & China*, pp. 177 ff.)

Dr. Sukumar Sen has noted that in the Avestan mythology, the deity has lost his proper name and is known only as Śraosha (to be derived from *śru*, to attend), being the obedient and watchful messenger of Ahur Mazda. The first similarity does not seem emphatic enough, though both are youth; for the one it is only an attribute, and while the second is himself a personification of youthfulness.

The chariot of Kumāra is of a very peculiar character, wheelless, one-poled, carved out mentally. Again no mention of horses is there. The third point in itself is not powerful.

It can be put as an additional argument (as Dr. Sen seems to have done), that in later times the forms of Śraosha and Skanda are just identical. Both have cock as their animal and are regarded as attendant, the former associated with Ahur Mazda, while the latter with Sūrya. Both hold lance in their hand. Again, both Skanda and Śraosha are described as teachers. But these statements, though have a semblance of resemblance, can hardly prove that the two gods originated from the same source. Though, Śraosha is described as a warrior, but he smites great demons in order to protect a few humble saints and travellers. His personality is rather angelic and he embodies in him, not valour, but obedience.

On the other hand, Skanda is a true war god; no idea of obedience is to be found in his case. So we think that, connection of Śraosha and Skanda was not from the origin but was evolved because of many similarities in their character, when myths and iconography of Sūrya were adopted from Iran. Skanda became one of the attendants of Sūrya not through the development of any previous myth in his character and own formation but because an Indian name was to be searched out in and given from the existing Hindu pantheon to Śraosha by way of cultural synthesis. In other words, we should say, Śraosha was recognised in Skanda in later times when Sūrya cult was accepted here from Iran. See Ch. V.

<sup>1</sup> RV. VIII. 101 and 102.



*manī* is of later period, there is hardly any ground to support that it does not faithfully reflect earlier traditions.

*En passant*, we may note here those features which in the *Rgveda* are associated with Agni, but which in later times are noted in the mythology connected with Skanda.

Agni is credited in the *Rgveda* with many mothers; two,<sup>1</sup> ten,<sup>2</sup> and not definitely referred to but in plural number.<sup>3</sup> If they were seven in number, as his seven sisters are,<sup>4</sup> and as can be guessed on the basis of the tradition in the *Yajurveda*,<sup>5</sup> recording seven wombs for (producing) Agni, it is in similarity with Skanda's seven mothers, as Kṛttikās, or, as Ṛṣipatnīs, from which one was dropped in subsequent development owing to certain fact observed in constellar happening, if Kṛttikās and Kārttikeya myth was at all based on that. Or, it was due to the contamination of a six-faced god of separate origin<sup>6</sup> with Skanda that one mother had to be indifferent in origin of Skanda, for only six heads were to be produced. Though this can account well for the disparition in the seven mouths of Agni in the *Rgveda*<sup>7</sup> and six mouths of Skanda in the epics, yet lack of any direct evidence to show Skanda having any connection with seven mouths comes in the way of any sudden conclusion.

As we have noted<sup>8</sup>, the word *guhā*, which is translated as cavern, cave, lair (derived from the  $\sqrt{guh}$ , to obscure), is often used with Agni in the *Rgveda*.<sup>9</sup> Curiously enough, Guha,<sup>10</sup> the 'Obscure One', is an epithet of Skanda in subsequent literature.

#### *Kumāra and Rudra :*

In the *Rgveda* 2.33.12, where the seer says that he bends before Rudra as Kumāra to his father, we find Kumāra in collocation with Rudra.

<sup>1</sup> RV. 1.31.2.

<sup>2</sup> RV. 1.92.2. Macdonell, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

<sup>3</sup> RV. 10.1.2; 10.1.7, 3.31.2, etc.

<sup>4</sup> It would also mean seven sisters not of Agni but sisters among themselves. In the case of Rudra we see that earlier references make Ambikā his sister, later she becomes his wife. In the case of Agni sisters might become mothers as well.

<sup>5</sup> VS. 17.79.

<sup>6</sup> *Infra*, Ch. III.

<sup>7</sup> *Saptaśrīṣāṇam*, RV. 3.5.5; also AV. 4.39.10, *saptāsyam*.

<sup>8</sup> *Supra*, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Agni is born in the lair. (1.67.4). He sits in the lair. (1.65.2). He lurks in the dark cave. (1.65.1). He goes above lair to lair. (1.67.3).

<sup>10</sup> *Infra*, Ch. III.



*Kumāra and Maruts :*

As in the case of certain features of Agni, we may detect similarity in some elements of Marut mythology as revealed in the *R̥gveda*, with those of the Kumāra mythology as developed in the *Purāṇas*.

Not only did Skanda seem to have shared his parentage with them<sup>1</sup> but he also inherited some of the interesting features from them. Though the Maruts are usually depicted as allies of Indra,<sup>2</sup> yet at places in the *R̥gveda* their rivalry with Indra is also hinted.<sup>3</sup> This was elaborated in the *Purāṇas* in form of the story according to which Indra entering the womb of their mother Diti did parcel the foetus into 49 portions by his thunderbolt.<sup>4</sup> Likewise in the *Mahābhārata*,<sup>5</sup> we find that Indra out of fear from the prowess of the newly born Skanda, hurled his thunderbolt at him, but later on when his attempts at killing Kumāra were foiled, he successfully sought to win his friendship.

The brilliance of appearance,<sup>6</sup> ruddy aspect<sup>7</sup> and lance in the hand,<sup>8</sup> are the features common to the Marut gods of the *R̥gveda* and the Skanda of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas*.

*Skanda and Other Gods :*

To Mr. Aravamuthan it appeared that Apām-Napāt and Soma, also, have contributed to the growth of the god Skanda. "Skanda grew up in embryo in a golden well, Mbh. 3,224, 13-14, and he was given suck to by the Kṛttikās. Apām-Napāt is offspring of the waters (RV. 1.186.5 ; 39.1) ; he generated himself as an embryo in the waters, of which he is the infant ; he is given suck to by the three mothers ; he shines amidst the waters ; he is youthful and beautiful (RV. 2.35.4, 5.11.13). Soma is the embryo of the waters (RV. 9.97.41) ; he is a child

<sup>1</sup> Though they are many in number, thrice-sixty (RV. 8.85.8), or thrice-seven (1.33.6), no doubt, are identical among themselves and all myths about them go together, no one is differentiated by any peculiar fact from the host. (Macdonell, *op. cit.* p. 78). They are brothers (5.59.6, 5.60.5), equal in age (1.165.1), grown together (5.56.5), have the same birthplace (5.53.3), one abode (1.165, 1), even of one mind (8.201, 21), and are alike in every respect.

<sup>2</sup> Macdonell, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

<sup>3</sup> RV. 1.170.8 ; also 1.171.6.

<sup>4</sup> *Matsya Purāṇa*, ch. 7 ; and in other *Purāṇas* also.

<sup>5</sup> Mbh., *infra*, Ch. III.

<sup>6</sup> Macdonell, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.



newly born and tended by seven sisters as mothers (RV. 9.61.4) ; he is a youth among the waters (RV. 5.45.9 ; 9.9.5) ; he is Gandharva of the waters (RV. 10.13.5).<sup>1</sup>

There are, of course, some points of resemblance in the mythology of Skanda on one hand and Soma and Apāin-Napāt on the other. However, from the *R̥gveda* to the epics is a far cry. In absence of the links between them for the intervening periods, nothing definitely can be stated.

#### *Kumāra in the AV. :*

In the *Atharvaveda*, we get another tradition of a Kumāra in the form of a decked-hair Gandharva, of comely mien, looking like a monkey, or a dog, and pursuing a dame. With a view to stop his meddling with mortals, a powerful charm was used.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Kumāra in Later Vedic Period :*

The sixth chapter on Agni-Chayana in the *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* furnishes interesting data on further development of Kumāra aspect of Agni.

The writer of the *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* explains the creative process in the following order<sup>3</sup> :

“Prajāpati alone was in the beginning, desirous to reproduce himself, practised austerity and created various natural phenomena, water, earth etc., in successive order ; and as Bhūtapati laid seed into Uṣas. There a Kumāra was born in a year ; he cried for name for thereby he be free from evil. The first name given to him by Prajāpati was Rudra, because he wept or cried, from the root ‘rut’ weep. Agni be ame of that form because Rudra is Agni. Then he was given more names, Śarva, Paśupati, Ugra, Aśani, Bhava, Mahādeva, and Īśāna. These are the eight names of Agni ; Kumāra is the Ninth (*Navama*). That Kumāra entered into the forms one after another ; for one never sees him as a mere Kumāra, but one sees those forms of his. To him, when built up (*cita*), he gives a name ; whereby he keeps away evil from him. He calls him by the name Bright (*Citra*), saying, ‘Thou art bright’.”

<sup>1</sup> Aravamuthan, T.G., *Gaṇeśa*, p. 22, reprint from the *J. of Oriental Research*, Vol. XVIII, pt.IV.

<sup>2</sup> *Śvevaika kapiṛivaikaḥ kumāraḥ sarvakeśakaḥ, priyo dṛśa iva bhūtvā gandharva sacate striyastamito nāśayāmasi brahmaṇā vīrya-vatā*, AV. 4.31.11.

<sup>3</sup> Summarised from the translation of Eggling, Pt. III, p. 157-61.



To Kumāra, Prajāpati gave the epithet *Citra*, which occurs for the first time in the *Rgveda* where Agni is called *Citra Śiśu*,<sup>1</sup> the Wonderful Babe. Perhaps the same meaning is conveyed by the word *adbhuta* used for Agni in the *Rgveda*.<sup>2</sup> An important statement in the *Vanaparva* of the *Mbh.*<sup>3</sup> throws veritable light on it. It says, 'Skanda, the Adbhuta, is the son of Agni, the Adbhuta'.

This explains how some of the earlier epithets of Agni were being transferred to his son, Kumāra, who himself was virtually evolved from the Kumāra aspect of the deity. Here in the same *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* passage it is stated that the Prajāpati sacrificed a goat for Kumāra-Agni.<sup>4</sup> The he- or she-goat was considered the animal sacred to Agni in the *Brāhmaṇa* texts.<sup>5</sup> In the epics, goat is found so much associated with Skanda that as Naigameṣa he is represented as goat-headed.<sup>6</sup>

It has been observed by the scholars that the several *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* passages<sup>7</sup> marked the most remarkable fusion of Agni and Rudra which had the far-reaching results upon the further evolution of Indian pantheon.

In the *Rgveda*, malevolence is prominently attributed to Rudra,<sup>8</sup> and in later *Saṃhitās* as well as in the *Brāhmaṇa* also, his terrific character is dominant.<sup>9</sup> If he was originally a Vedic storm-god, he combined with a local aboriginal disease-god,<sup>10</sup> a forest and mountain deity,<sup>11</sup> or some kindred god, such

<sup>1</sup> RV. 10.1.2.

<sup>2</sup> RV. 5.10.12; 6.15.2.

<sup>3</sup> *Mbh.* 3.213.2; 3.212.5. Also *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, 94.7.

<sup>4</sup> ŚB. 6.2.1.5.

<sup>5</sup> AV. 9.5.13; MS. 4.8.3; ŚB. 6.4.4.15; *Gopatha*. 2.3.19.; TS. 4.32; TB. 3.7.3.1. Aja is identical to Agni, AV. 9.5.7.

<sup>6</sup> *Infra*, Chs. III & IV.

[There is also one Aja-ekapāta, the One-footed Goat Deity (Macdonell, *op. cit.*, p. 75), of which connection with the number six is conspicuous. (RV. 1.164.6; AV. 13.1.6). No wonder if embodying himself the cultworship of goat, Aja-ekapāta was also helpful in the goat association of Skanda. Aja-ekapāta's nature itself (Macdonell, *op. cit.*, p. 73-4), and his reckoning amongst eleven Rūdras show beyond doubts that he was a god of Rudra type (*Mbh.* 1. 66. 2566 etc.; see Sorensen, *op. cit.*, p. 27).

<sup>7</sup> ŚB. 6.1.3.1 ff; 1.7.3.8.

<sup>8</sup> Macdonell, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>10</sup> Hopkins, *ION*, 118.

<sup>11</sup> Hopkins, *E.R.E.*, Vol. II, p. 812.



as a vegetation spirit and even a god of the dead to form the composite figure<sup>1</sup> of the *Yajurveda*. That "most of the elements which coalesced with Rudra were malicious spirits"<sup>2</sup> is the verdict of Jacobi.

It may, therefore, be assumed that from the beginning he was the representative of a class, or rather classes, of evil spirits, and that the many Rudras whom the *Satarudriya* mentions have all been blended in the conception of the one Rudra, who is present in woods, streams, desert places, etc.<sup>3</sup> In this connection an important statement is made in the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*: 'O Agni, thou art Rudra, this is the nature of *Satarudriya*.'<sup>4</sup> The *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* describes an elaborate and interesting rite, meant for the appeasement of Rudra. It is called *Satarudriya* offering. It is stated in the *Brāhmaṇa*: "They gathered for him the food, and thereby appeased him. It is called *Śāntadevatya*, which is doubtless, is here called mystically *Satarudriya*."<sup>5</sup>

The eight names, in the quoted passage of the *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* (6.1.3.1-20), given to Kumāra appear in the *Atharvaveda* as separate deities<sup>6</sup>, and in the *Vājasaneyi Samhitā* they are enumerated, with some others, as gods or forms of one god.<sup>7</sup> Another passage in the *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* informs us that, it was Agni, the god, known in different regions by different names; *Sarva*, as called by the easterners; *Bhava*, as by the *Bāhikas*; as *Paśupati*, *Rudra*, *Agni* (by others).

From the times of the *Yajurveda*, we find the process of *generalisation* through which various deities with kindred qualities were crystallised into different groups. Thus in the *Satarudriya*<sup>8</sup>, the divinities manifesting destructive nature, were associated or identified with Rudra. Again, under influence of the already achieved useful identification of Agni and Rudra,<sup>9</sup> the process develops further. In this chapter, it culminated into the formation of a group of nine deities with Rudra, Agni and Kumāra being principal gods.

<sup>1</sup> Keith, *Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and Upaniṣads*, p. 148.

<sup>2</sup> Hopkins, *E.R.E.*, Vol. II, p. 812.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 812.

<sup>4</sup> *Tvamagne rudra iti satarudriyasya rūpam*, TB. 3.11.99.

<sup>5</sup> ŚB. 9.1.1. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism, etc.*, p. 148-9 (his Collected Works, Vol. IV). Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

<sup>7</sup> VS. 39.8.. Macodnell, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>8</sup> VS. 16.

<sup>9</sup> ŚB. 3.3.1.10; 5.2.4.13; 6.1.3.10. TB. 1.1.5.8.9; 1.1.6.6; 1.1.8.4; 1.4.3.6; etc. Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 144.



The Agni-cayana passage of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* makes it clear that at this stage Agni, Kumāra and Rudra, entering into synthesis with several other folk deities, were now so closely incorporated that it was no wonder if they were identified in certain cases. The close and intimate association of this *triumvirate* as delineated in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, supplies us a clue to the Purāṇic riddle of Agni-Kumāra being represented as the son of Śiva. In later period, Agni, as many other Vedic divinities like Indra, Varuṇa etc. did, derogated from the high status, but Kumāra shaking hands with one of the pre-eminent gods of the time not only continued but also became more and more powerful and exalted.

Skanda, in later period establishes his position as commander-in-chief of the army<sup>1</sup> of gods, and allegorically his wife is stated to be Devasenā, the Divine Army. Though some connections of Agni with army are hinted even in the *R̥gveda*<sup>2</sup> but in the *Kāthaka Saṁhitā* they clearly declare Agni as Senānī of gods, 'This Agni is the chief of the army of gods'.<sup>3</sup> This is confirmed by the similar statement in the *Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā*.<sup>4</sup> The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* refers to Agni as *Anīkavat*, the Fire-god having an army. In the Jewel-offering ceremony of the *Rājasūya* of the king, it is said, visiting the house of the commander of army, he offers a cake on eight potsherds for Agni Anīkavat.<sup>5</sup> No wonder, this aspect of Agni who was also connected with heroes,<sup>6</sup> continued in Skanda as a divine army leader and god of heroes.

A *senā* was also associated with Rudra. In the *Śatarudriya* of the *Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā*<sup>7</sup> homage is paid to the 'Commander of army with golden arm'. This passage has been rendered clear by a statement in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* that 'Rudra-Agni is indeed the golden-armed leader of hosts, and the lord of regions'.<sup>8</sup> The long shouting hosts, long-haired followers, armies and troops,<sup>9</sup> and wild haired women with horrid shriekings,<sup>10</sup> of Rudra are mentioned in the *Atharvaveda*. It is evident that this was the nature of a long retinue following

<sup>1</sup> *Infra*, Ch. III.

<sup>2</sup> RV. 7.63.1 ; 10.84.2.

<sup>3</sup> *Eṣo'gnir devānām senānīh*, KS. 36. 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Agnir vai devānām senānīh*, MS. 1.10.14.

<sup>5</sup> ŚB. 5.3.1.1. Also *Maitrāyaṇī Saṁ.* 3.13.14, *agnaye anīkavate*.

<sup>6</sup> RV. 10.80. 1—7.

<sup>7</sup> VS. 16. 17. Repeated in other *Yajurveda Saṁhitās*.

<sup>8</sup> ŚB. 9.1.1.18 ; *Translation*, pt. IV, p. 160.

<sup>9</sup> AV. 11.2.31.

<sup>10</sup> 11.2.11. Cp. *Mātrkāś* of later period.



Rudra being similar to him in terrible nature. Thus the myth of *senā* came to be associated with Skanda.<sup>1</sup>

Agni was prayed for a son, and he bestowed progeny on his faithful votaries,<sup>2</sup> as he rendered the womb of woman capable of conception.<sup>3</sup> He was invoked against demons and goblins,<sup>4</sup> especially those evil beings who beset women<sup>5</sup> and attack the babe in the womb and when born.<sup>6</sup> He was called *Jātavedas*<sup>7</sup>, knowing about the born one (*jāta*), because he knows all generations of mankind.<sup>8</sup>

Rudra, on the other hand, was a terrible being, expressing his wrath in many ways,<sup>9</sup> slaying men and their connections, and harming the property.<sup>10</sup> His favour was repeatedly sought for not to afflict children with diseases<sup>11</sup> and not to injure them.<sup>12</sup>

In Skanda as *Graha*-deity we find both the aspects—child-protecting and child-destroying. The existence of these contradicting traits in Skanda was probably due to the fact that its proto-types—Agni and Rudra were respectively benefic and malefic deities.

The third stage in the process of generalisation in connection with Kumāra was reached when the area of identification was broadened to include several other new deities.

It is observed by H. Jacobi in his chapter on 'Hindudism' contributed to the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*,<sup>13</sup> in connection with Rudra that, "The

<sup>1</sup> Recently a view has been put forth that the political *paṇḍal* had its origin in the *paṇḍ* of Śiva and his son Skanda—a suggestion that it was not originally an Aryan institution. Drekmeyer, *Kingship and Community in Early India*, 1962, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> RV. 3.1.23; 1.64.1.

<sup>3</sup> RV. 3.3.10; 10.51.3.

<sup>4</sup> RV. 10.87.1; AV. 5.29.

<sup>5</sup> AV. 8.6. The hymn is named *Garbhadoṣanivāraṇam*. On this see note by Griffith, *Translation*, Vol. I, p. 403.

<sup>6</sup> RV. 10.162.

<sup>7</sup> Macdonell, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

<sup>8</sup> RV. 1.70.1-3; 6.15. 13.

<sup>9</sup> Macdonell, *op. cit.*, pp. 75, 76.

<sup>10</sup> RV. 1.114.7-8; 2.33.1.

<sup>11</sup> RV. 7.16.2.

<sup>12</sup> RV. 1.114.8; 6.28.7; 6.46.4; VS. 16.16; AV. 11.2.29; *Paipp. S.* 5.21.5.

<sup>13</sup> Vol. II, p. 812.



many Rudras blended in the conception of the One Rudra (which he designates a little later as 'the original Rudra')". We have no hesitation in saying the same thing in case of KUMĀRA. The many Kumāras blended in the conception of the Original Agni-Kumāra.

As we have already seen there was only one Kumāra in the *Rgveda*. Later on, however, we find an amazing array of Kumāras being conceived around him, the one common feature among them being their *Kaumārya* or celibacy. Gradually, all of them tended to merge in the increasingly growing personality of Agni-Kumāra, with the result that the amalgam shows astounding diversity in traits.

A Kumāra was among the Gandharvas,<sup>1</sup> another was among the Yakṣas,<sup>2</sup> the third as a demon inflicting upon children,<sup>3</sup> the fourth as a renowned ascetic, the fifth is noted among preceptors<sup>4</sup>, the sixth is enumerated among heroes, etc.<sup>5</sup>

Of course, here, *Kaumārya*—the youthful energy or celibacy is the common trait, but they are sometimes conceived as separate and different deities, having different epithets and showing distinct individual features.

With the ascalating in the status of Agni-Kumāra, these other Kumāras came to be associated with him. That is why Skanda by the time of the epics had become a very composite figure, having assimilated in him various Kumāra gods and entities.

<sup>1</sup> AV. 4.31.11; *supra*, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, on Guha, pp. 8-9; 'The Geographical contents of the *Mahāmāyūrī*', JUPHS, Vol. XV, pt. II, p. 27; Yakṣa Kumāra of Rohitaka.

<sup>3</sup> *Pāraskara G.S.* 1.16.23-4; *infra*, pp. 15f.

<sup>4</sup> *Chāndogya U.*, 7.26.2; *infra*, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> We should refer here the division of the gods into four classes by Jainas in their mythology. There is one of *Bhavanādhipatis*, *Bhavanavāsins*, or of *Bhaumikeyas*, in which there are ten orders, viz.,

<sup>1</sup> Asurakumāras;

<sup>2</sup> Nāgakumāras;

<sup>3</sup> Taḍitkumāras, or Vidyutkumāras;

<sup>4</sup> Suvarṇa—or Suparṇaka-kumāras;

<sup>5</sup> Agnikumāras;

<sup>6</sup> Dvipakumāras (Divakumāras);

<sup>7</sup> Udadhikumāras;

<sup>8</sup> Dikkumāras;

<sup>9</sup> Pavana—or Vāta-kumāras;

<sup>10</sup> Gaṇika—or Sanitakumāras.

Bühler, *The Indian Sect of the Jainas*, pp. 72-3.



## CHAPTER II

## SKANDA IN POST-VEDIC AND PRE-EPIC PERIOD

In this chapter we propose to consider further development of the pantheon of Skanda from the post-Brāhmaṇa period up to the eve of epic, roughly corresponding to 300 B.C. Up to this point we have pursued the use of the name Kumāra, but from now onwards we begin to meet clearly with his name Skanda. Perhaps the achievements of this period with respect to the religious evolution of different cults are found represented in the *Deva-Gāyatrīs* which date towards the end of the period. We have the *Skanda-Gāyatrī* along with nine others in the *Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā*:<sup>1</sup>

*Tat-Kumārīya vidmahe Kūrttikeyāya dhīmahi*  
*Tannaḥ Skandah pracodayāt*

The *Gāyatrīs* are conspicuously absent in other extant Saṁhitās of the *Black Yajurveda*, i.e. *Taittirīya*, and *Kāthaka*. But they are found in the apocryphal chapter of the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*,<sup>2</sup> which cannot be taken much earlier than the 3rd century B.C.

The word Skanda by which the god is popularly known in this period, occurs for the first time in the *Chāndogya Up.*,<sup>3</sup> as another name of a certain Sanatkumāra, who taught to Nārada the doctrine of "the Progressive worship of Brahman up to the Universal Soul".<sup>4</sup> It may also stand for the god in the compound 'Skandaloka' found in the *Paippalāda Saṁhitā*<sup>5</sup> of the *Atharvaveda*. But this text is corrupt and doubtful; the meaning is not clear; and in the corresponding passage of the Śaunaka recension the phrase Skandaloka does not occur.

As said above, in the *Chāndogya Up.*<sup>6</sup> the word Skanda is found as another name of Sanatkumāra. "People call him Skanda—yea, they call him Skanda." This sets forth a new problem with respect to the basis of the identification of Skanda and Sanatkumāra.

<sup>1</sup> MS. 2.9.1-2.

<sup>2</sup> TA. 10.15. Also in the *Mahānārāyaṇa Up.*, belonging to the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ch. Up.* 7.26.2.

<sup>4</sup> Hume, R.E., *Upaniṣads*, p. 250.

<sup>5</sup> *Paipp. Saṁ.*, 2.21.1.

<sup>6</sup> *Ch. Up.* 7.26.2.



It has been observed that the Upaniṣadic philosophy developed as a reaction against the Vedic lore and rituals, and that it grew amongst the Kṣatriya chiefs and kings whom we see as teachers in several *Upaniṣads*<sup>1</sup>. It can be well argued that Sanatkumāra, whatever might have been his caste and function, was identified with the divine Kṣatriya chief,<sup>2</sup> i.e., Skanda owing to the general tendency illustrating the mutual conflict for supremacy between Kṣatriyas and Brāhmaṇas. But such a view is more subjective and hardly conclusive. It seems rather improbable that a philosopher was identified deliberately with a Kṣatriya chief because many of Upaniṣadic teachers were Kṣatriyas unless he was so; and one cannot show that Sanatkumāra was a Kṣatriya king. Again this theory loses much of its weight when we see that there is no reference earlier than the *Chāndogya Up.* to the warrior god Skanda, though it cannot be denied that his militaristic character is the chief aspect of his personality even later on.

As we see, the one main point in identifying two or several deities in the development of Skanda pantheon was the common Kumāra (youthful or celibate) nature. In this case also, to us it appears very natural, that one leading Kumāra philosopher was taken identical to the popular Kumāra god.

The word *Sanat* is found as early as the *Rgveda*<sup>3</sup> and means 'eternity'. The two out of the other three names forming collectively with Sanatkumāra the tetrad of eternal sages in the epics and the Purāṇas<sup>4</sup>, are also met with in the Vedas, viz., Sanaka<sup>5</sup> and Sanātana.<sup>6</sup> The underlying idea in their conception is to be noted as their ever youthful celibate existence. The idea of Kumāra endows in itself the thought of *Brahmacarya* which is the basic feature of an ascetic. Ascetic as Yogī is always in search of the ways aiming at and obtaining the secret of youth. It is one important goal of the mystic practices followed by ascetics to maintain perennial youth. And, this conception of Kumārahood was the most prominent factor in the personality of the sage Sanatkumāra, the Eternal Bachelor, and in his identification with the deified Kumārahood, now known as Skanda.

<sup>1</sup> Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 492-494.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 310.

<sup>3</sup> RV. 2.3.6 ; 3.3.1.

<sup>4</sup> Mbh. XII, 341.13078 (Calcutta ed.); Agrawala, *Matsya Purāṇa, A Study*, 1963, p. 61.

<sup>5</sup> RV. 1.33.4 ; 3.29.14 ; 10.69.12.

<sup>6</sup> TS. 4.3.3.1.



The Pāli *Nikāyas*<sup>1</sup> have also recorded one Sanatkumāra, designated as Brahmā, who being a good speaker had his voice invested with all the eight qualities of perfect speech. He is said to have uttered the verse which means that though the Kṣatriyas take precedence among all those that trust in lineage, he that is perfect in wisdom takes precedence over all.<sup>2</sup> An interesting account is given of his form and the way of his manifestation, as he appeared before the Buddha. He assumed the form of a Kumāra (*kumāravaṇṇi*) having five crests (*pañcasikho*). There seems hardly any doubt that the Sanatkumāra of the Upaniṣad and the Sanainkumāra of the Buddhist texts are one and the same person. That great teachers and sages were exalted to the status of Brahmā after their demise is evident from the *Takkariya Jātaka*.<sup>3</sup>

A passage in the *Paippalāda Saṁhitā*<sup>4</sup> seems to throw much useful light on the derivation of the word Skanda, where Agni is invoked to drive away the demon Yakṣmā. Here the verb used for denoting the action is *apaskandayatu*, having the *√skandir* prefixed with *apa*. In Vedic literature,<sup>5</sup> Agni was invoked against demons and this was much emphasised in the Atharvavedic texts.<sup>6</sup> This aspect of Agni readily invoked against disease-demons was easily be named after the action involved, as *Apaskanda* or *Skanda* only.

The *√skandir*, in the *Pāṇinīya Dhātupāṭha*<sup>7</sup> meant either to go or to suck out. It was the known characteristic of fire 'to suck out' or 'to make dry', hence demons or disease-demons<sup>8</sup> of fiery nature<sup>9</sup> were to be named Skanda. Thus, the disease-demons or diseases were named Skanda owing to their fiery nature of *śoṣaṇa*. The fire god invoked against them was called Skanda. As in-

<sup>1</sup> *Digha-Nikāya*, Devanāgarī ed., Vol. I, p. 86; Vol. II, p. 157-60, 162, 163, 168-70, 172-178, 195; Vol. III, p. 76. *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, Vol. I, p. 153.

<sup>2</sup> *Dialogues of the Buddha*, Vol. I, p. 121.

<sup>3</sup> *Jātaka* No. 481.

<sup>4</sup> *Paipp. Saṁh.* 2.24.1-5. '...apaskandayatvatidūramasmāt'.

<sup>5</sup> Macdonell in his *Vedic Mythology* (p. 95) says, "What is probably the oldest function of fire in regard to its cults, that of burning and dispelling evil spirits and hostile magic still survived in the Veda". See also ŚB. 1.2.1.6; 1.2.2.13; 7.4.1.34.

<sup>6</sup> Shende, N.J., *The Foundations of the Atharvānic Religion*, pp. 15-18.

<sup>7</sup> No. 979, *skandir gatiśoṣaṇayoh*.

<sup>8</sup> "The diseases were thought to be caused by evil agencies of ghosts and goblins.....Theoretically a disease itself was a demon." Karambelkar, V.W., *The Atharvaveda and the Ayurveda*, p. 41.

<sup>9</sup> *Hastyaṅgurveda* of Pālakamuni, Mahārogaśthāna, Ch. 10, p. 75; quoted by Prof. Hans Raj in his *Physical and Scientific Interpretation of Aryan Mythology*, pt. I, p. 10.



Rudra, so also in Skanda, there seems to be a fusion of the contradictory traits—malevolent and benevolent, the disease-demon and the god eradicating the diseases. This deity of composite nature on the one hand heads the group of goblins and ghosts causing diseases, especially to children, on the other he is invoked for removing evils and eradicating diseases. And, these demons harassing little children, Kumāras and Kumārīs, were named also as Kumāra and Kumārī *Grahas*, i.e. possessors or seizers of children.

### *Skanda as Graha Devatā :*

In the *Pāraskara Gṛhyasūtra*,<sup>1</sup> we have Kumāra, a demon who brings diseases and attacks the babe and its mother. His parents are Saramā, the divine bitch,<sup>2</sup> and Sīsara, and his brothers are Śyāma and Śabala, the two dogs of Yama<sup>3</sup>. In the *Gṛhyasūtras* we come across with a host of such demons harassing children against whom rites of imprecations are prescribed.<sup>4</sup> As Keith has observed,<sup>5</sup> there is a marked tendency of enumerating as many names as possible in the rites against fiends. This was helpful in raising a large number of such inferior demons. Once Kumāra Skanda gathering special significance became the leading one amongst such evil beings concerning progeny the myths of parentage, brotherhood, sonship, servitude etc. were evolved to theorise the relationship with the leader.

Earliest of them appears Nejaṃeṣa in the *Parīśiṣṭa* of the *R̥gveda*<sup>6</sup>. In case of sterility of a woman, the *R̥gvidhāna* prescribes the recitation of this *Khila* consisting of three stanzas beginning with Nejaṃeṣa<sup>7</sup>, and the text of the RV. 10.184.1 entitled as. a prayer for a child.<sup>8</sup> In the *Āśvalāyana Gṛhyasūtra*<sup>9</sup> this hymn is prescribed along with other stanzas in the *Śimantonmayana* rite in the fourth month of pregnancy when Nejaṃeṣa is to be invoked with other deities. The association of this Nejaṃeṣa, which reappears as Naigameṣa, Naiga-

<sup>1</sup> P.G.S. 1.16.24.

<sup>2</sup> Macdonell, *op. cit.*, pp. 151, 173.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Pāraskara G. S.* 1.16.25-4. *Hiranyakeśi G.S.* 2.1.3. sq., 2.1.4.2., 21.2.7 sq. *Āpastamba*, 7.18.1-12.

<sup>5</sup> Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

<sup>6</sup> RV. 4.13.1.

<sup>7</sup> *R̥gvidhāna*, 4.23.2f., ed. by Gonda, p. 118f.

<sup>8</sup> *Garbhārthāsīḥ*, in the *Sarvānukramaṇī*; appears with several other verses in the *Mānava G.S.* 2.18.2, and the *Kaśīkasūtra*, 3.5.5.

<sup>9</sup> A.G.S. 1.14.3. SBE, Vol. 39, p. 181.



meṃ etc. is found to be very close with Skanda in the *Mahābhārata* as we shall see later.

Mahāsenā figures as a disease demon in the *Pāraskara G.S.*<sup>1</sup>; elsewhere also<sup>2</sup> in the list of the deities invoked in the rite to get rid of the Vināyakas we find him mentioned. The *Sāmavidhāna Brāhmaṇa*<sup>3</sup> mentions Skanda together with one Vināyaka.

Besides, lists of names recited at the time of giving libation of water (*Tarpana*) to sages, deities and others, we find some names associated with Skanda-Kumāra, which are to be recited together associating their intimate relationship: Sanatkumāra, Indra, Śaṣṭhī, Viśākha, Mahāsenā, Śaṣṭmukha, Senānī, Jayanta, Bālagrahas, Skanda-pārśadas, Skandapārśadis, etc.<sup>4</sup>

References to the attendants at Skanda forming his *Paṇḍit* are important. They are both male and female, Pārśadas and Pārśadis. One word *Skanda-dakṣiṇāntān* is to be found in the *Agniveśya G.S.*<sup>5</sup>, which is to be translated as, those who accompany Skanda on the right side, or those who are his favourites. Yet other significant words are *Skandavaha* and *Bālagraha*.<sup>6</sup>

#### *Skanda and Viśākha :*

From the *Gaṇapāṭha* (to Pāṇini, II. 4.14) it is assumed that Skanda and Viśākha were the two names known to Pāṇini as deities worshipped in pair. From the nature of the discussion given by Patañjali on the sūtra V. 3.99 it is evident that the words *Śivaḥ*, *Skandaḥ* and *Viśākhaḥ* are formed in case of idols used 'for one's livelihood, but not for sale'. The names were based on stock illustrations (*Mūrdhābhīṣikta Udāharaṇa*) which had in all likelihood come down from the time of Pāṇini himself. Running down the corridor of time Patañjali examines the bearings of the sūtra in case of the images set up by the Mauryas, 'greedy of gold', and in the last, points out the contemporaneous (*samprati*) images under actual worship which were suitable examples of Pāṇini's rule.<sup>7</sup>

This throws a good deal of light on the religious conditions of the rather obscure period ranging from Pāṇini (pre-Maurya) to Patañjali (Śuṅga period).

<sup>1</sup> P.G.S. 1.16.24.

<sup>2</sup> *Mānava G.S.* 2.14. *India of Vedic Kalpasūtras*, p. 467.

<sup>3</sup> 1.4.6-19.

<sup>4</sup> *Agniveśya G.S.* 2.6.3 : 26 ; *Śaṅkhalikhita D.S.*, Kane ed., p. 21 ; *Baudhāyana D.S.* 2.5.9.8.

<sup>5</sup> *Agni. G.S.* 6.2.14.

<sup>6</sup> *Śaṅkhalikhita D.S.*, Kane ed., p. 21.

<sup>7</sup> Patañjali on Pāṇini V.3.99. Agrawala, *India as known to Pāṇini*, pp. 361-3.



The worship of the images of the post-Vedic deities, e.g., Śiva, Skanda and Viśākha was so popular in the age that some people used to earn their livelihood by the profession of showing their idols in the public.

*Jayanta, Vaijayanta, etc. :*

In the *Arthaśāstra*<sup>1</sup>, Kauṭilya mentions the shrines of several gods installed in the centre of the city. They are Aparājita, Apratihata, Jayanta, Vaijayanta, Śiva, Vaiśravaṇa, Aśvin and Śrī-Madirā. There is also one Senāpati, occurring further in the passage, among four deities after whom the principal gates of the city were to be named.<sup>2</sup>

Jayanta of the above passage may be identified with Skanda, for the *Grhyasūtra* text<sup>3</sup> prescribing the *Sūlagava* sacrifice mentions Jayanta as the son of Sūlagava, a name of Rudra and his wife Miḍhuṣi. The two names Jayanta and Aparājita are also found in one of the *Jātaka gāthās*.<sup>4</sup> But in one of the ancient-most Sūtras<sup>5</sup> of the Jaina Āgamas, Vijaya, Vaijayanta, Jaynata, Aparājita and Sarvārthasiddhiga are said to be the five great gods (*Anuttā surā*). First four of these clearly form a group of four divine names connected with 'victory', which was to be sought for invariably in affairs of war which the war-god Skanda stood for.

*Mahāsena and Guḷha :*

The epithet Mahāsena, "One who has a large army", is found in the Pāli literature. It occurs as an adjective of Mrtyu, the Death, in the *Jātaka gāthās*,<sup>6</sup> and of Māra in the *Dīgha Nikāya*.<sup>7</sup> Mahāsena, as we shall see, was a invariable and exclusive epithet of Skanda, which at times in literature occurs either as his name or as the name of his associate deity. But these pieces of evidence would indicate that the word Mahāsena during this period was used in its literal sense, and that it occurred as an adjective of such deities as Mrtyu and Māra. Likewise, there is no evidence in the Pāli literature that Guha was the name of Skanda. On the other hand in the *Āṭṭanāṭiya Sutta* of the *Dīgha-Nikāya*<sup>8</sup>, in the form Guḷha it occurs as the name of a Yakṣa.

<sup>1</sup> 2.3.23 ; *Eng. Translation*, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *India of Vedic Kalpasūtras*, p. 434-435.

<sup>4</sup> *Jātaka*, Vol. II, p. 353 (No. 1945).

<sup>5</sup> *Uttarājjhayāna*, p. 1087.

<sup>6</sup> *Jātaka*, II, p. 166.

<sup>7</sup> *Dīgha Nikāya*, Vol. II, 7.12.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.9.4, Vol. III, p. 164.



*Khandamaha :*

In some of the early Jaina Āgamic texts there occurs a list of popular cults called *Maha*, where worship of Skanda is designated as *Khandamaha* (*Skandamaha*).<sup>1</sup> If the *Āvaśyaka-cūrṇi* is to be believed as recording earlier tradition, the festival in honour of the god Khanda was in vogue during the lifetime of Mahāvīra as it informs that when the teacher reached Sāvattthī, a well-decked image of Khanda was carried out in a chariot in procession.<sup>2</sup>

*Skanda-Yāga or Dhūrta-Kalpa :*

We have a very informative chapter entitled *Skandayāga* or *Dhūrtakalpa* collected as one of the *Parīṣiṣṭas* of the *Atharvaveda*.<sup>3</sup> Its date should be assigned with some amount of certainty to the period of the composition of the earlier *Gr̥hyasūtras*. At the most it may be a slightly later in its contents and language. We have alluded to the popular religious festivals known as *Maha* of which *Skandamaha* also formed part. The details of worship furnished by the *Dhūrtakalpa* of the *Atharva Parīṣiṣṭa* may be taken with fair certainty to fill the picture of the *Skandamaha* festival as celebrated in popular worship in the month of *Kārttika*.

It adds considerably to our knowledge about the cult of Skanda. The name *Dhūrtakalpa*, meaning literally 'Rouge-ritual', is rather a puzzling one. From the body of the text as well as from the title it is clear that the epithet *Dhūrta* is applied to Skanda, as he is called '*Bhagavān devo Dhūrtah*', several times. He is revealed in this text as the god of cunning and roguery. As supreme god he is invoked for the fulfilment of wishes, the attainment of wealth and prosperity, and for granting freedom from the maleficent deeds of demons and of men to his votaries through an amulet.

The worship as prescribed in this text is not different from the popular mode of traditional worship of folk divinities styled in the *Gītā* as 'A leaf, a flower, a fruit, and water'.<sup>4</sup> During the course of the performance of the 'Yāga', the god at the outset was offered scented water for his feet, perfumes, flowers, incense and leaves. A lamp was also lighted. This 'Yāga' consisted of these six offerings accompanied by the recitation of six verses, one prescribed verse on each

<sup>1</sup> *Nāyādharmakāhā*, Vaidya ed., p. 23; *Rāyapenseṇiyasutta*, Kaṇḍikā 148.

<sup>2</sup> Jaina, J.C., *Life in the Jaina Canons*, p. 217.

<sup>3</sup> Goodwin, Charles J., *JAOS*. Proceed., May, 1890, pp. V-XIII, *Atharva Parīṣiṣṭa*, XX.

<sup>4</sup> *Patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam*, etc., *Gītā*, 9.26.



occasion.<sup>1</sup> These very things are noted by Coomaraswamy as forming offerings in connection with Yakṣa cult.<sup>2</sup> Having made the *haviṣya*, of which detailed account is given, the god was worshipped with the six Kāmasūktas; offering was made to his different names and in different utterances reverence was offered to him, particularly in the way of worship as stated by the Gopathas. This association of the Gopatha section of the Atharvavedins appears to be very significant, however, it is not corroborated by any other evidence.

This all is said to be guided by *Bhakti*. All the offerings (*upahāra*) were made (*niveditam*) out of devotion (*bhakti*). This leaves no doubt about the indigenous nature of the Dhūrta cult.<sup>3</sup> The devotee is almost assured that having accepted the offering, as a rule, the god will be well pleased, and the fulfilment of the desire for the material prosperity of every kind and the assurance of preservation by an amulet from magic, from foes, and from the evil deeds of men and women would be its consequence.

As this text is of great importance for our study we have given it in full with English translation in an appendix.<sup>4</sup> From this source much valuable information about Skanda is as follows.

Skanda, besides the name Dhūrta, is given many other names and epithets, viz., Viśākha, Pinākasena, Vināyakasena, Śālakaṭaṅkaṭa, Kumāra, Lohitagātra, Ṣaḍānana or Ṣaḍāśya, Svachchanda, Nirmala, Bhrātṛstriṅkāma, Agniputra, Kārttikeya or Kṛttikāputra, Brahmanya and Svāmī, etc.

At one place Viśākha is the name of his brother. Pinākasena is not clear. Literally it would mean, having the army of *Pināka*. In the *Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā*, 3.61, *Pināka* is the mountain where Rudra is said to be residing; but in 16.51, it would mean a club or a bow, held by Śiva. Probably it meant an army of bow-wielding soldiers or sharp-shooters. Somewhat similar is the word

<sup>1</sup> Six verses are given as follows :

- (१) इमा आप इति—गंधोदक पाद्यम्;
- (२) षट्चैव हिरण्यवर्णा इति मे दिव्यो गन्धर्व इति—गंधान्;
- (३) यस्ते गंव इति चेमाः सुमनस इति—सुमनसः;
- (४) प्रियं धातुरिति वनस्पतिरसो मेध्य इति—घूपम्;
- (५) यक्ष्येण ते दिवा अग्नि शुक्रश्चेति—दीपम्;
- (६) ये विश्वतः सुप्रतीक इति—पर्णानि ।

See Appendix II.

<sup>2</sup> Coomaraswamy, A.K., *Yakṣas*, pp. 24-27, 28.

<sup>3</sup> On *Bhakti*, see *ibid.*, pp. 27-8.

<sup>4</sup> Appendix II.



*Vināyakasena*, having an army of the *Vināyakas*, which may be connected with the *Vināyaka* gods mentioned in the *Sūtras*.<sup>1</sup> The other epithet *Śālakataṅkata*, found here, is, curiously enough, one of the four *Vināyakas* in the *Mānava G.S.*,<sup>2</sup> and occurs in the *Yājñavalkya Smṛti*<sup>3</sup> in the context of *Śānti* (Pacifatory rites) of bad dreams as the class-name of certain deities. The names like *Kumāra*, *Lohitagātra*, *Ṣaḍānana* or *Ṣaḍāśya* are connected with the form of god. Again, *Svacchanda*, *Nirmala* and *Bhrātrastrikāma* inform about his nature. *Agni-putra*, *Kārttikeya* or *Kṛttikāputra* and *Brahmaṇya* point to his parentage and origin.

About his personality they say he has all forms (*Sarvarūpa*). He is ever youthful (*Yuvā*, *Kumāra*), appears as if born today (*Sadyojāta*). He has six faces, eighteen eyes (sic, twelve eyes), golden complexion, a red body and a brightness filled with light.

The doubts about his origin are very curiously raised. He is called the (offspring) of *Śiva*, *Agni* and *Kṛttikās* at one and the same time. But about his obscure and disputed origin, the puzzled devotee exclaims, "Some call son of *Agni*, son of *Kṛttikās*, son of *Indra*; some son of *Paśupati*, of *Rudra*; who thou art, that art thou; reverence to thee."

He is borne by the animals like white horses, elephants, lions, tigers, bulls, peacocks and partridges with variegated wings; or animals of all colours carry him. The young man is always surrounded by companies of mothers, by a thousand maidens. He is asked to come with a company (*gaṇa*), with an army (*sainya*), with a mount (*vāhana*), with followers (*anucara*), with fathers and with mothers and with his brother *Viśākha*. His are red blossoms, also red ointment, and his cocks are also having red eyes. He is equipped with his never-failing *Śakti*, always associated with (victorious) bells and banners. He has a choice bell, so he is called *Varaghaṇṭā*. In the ritual the god was probably represented by an image perhaps in clay, which in the end was discarded and with due ceremony was thrown in water.

A careful consideration of the text and the ceremony described leads to the conclusion that *Skanda* is here a god of rogues. Curiously enough, this aspect is earlier to be found associated with *Rudra*. He is hailed in the *Maitrāyaṇī* and *Kāṭhaka Saṁhitās* as *Dhūrta*.<sup>4</sup> In the *Śatarudriya* hymn of the *Vā-*

<sup>1</sup> Ramgopal, *India of Vedic Kalpasūtras*, p. 467.

<sup>2</sup> *Mānava G.S.* II. 14.

<sup>3</sup> *Yājñavalkya Sm.* 1.285.

<sup>4</sup> MS. 1.8.5.; KS. VI.7. Also *Āpastamba Ś.S.* VI. 11.3; *Hiranyakeśi Ś.S.* 11.18.



*jasaneyi Samhitā*, Rudra is 'the patron of thieves, of free-booters, of brigands, of all those who go forth by night in troops and live on plunder. Being a soldier he is a bandit. He is also the head of the armies, the god of the braves, of foot-soldiers, and those who fight in chariots, of all those, who live by bow, the sword, and the spear<sup>1</sup>.' They moved in *Gaṇa*, *Vrāta*, *Gr̥tsa* and *Senā*<sup>2</sup>. This presents a graphic account of such peoples who lived by violence (*utsedha*)<sup>3</sup> and formed tribal hordes (*vrāta*), which in some cases, in fact, developed in the form of Saṅgha polity of Āyudhajīvi nature. It is observed about them that they lived by the profession of arms<sup>4</sup> and were mostly comprised of soldiers<sup>5</sup>. Fortunately, as archaeological records are found many a tribal coin hailing from the eastern Panjab, Rohtak, Ujjain, Ayodhya, ranging in date from the 2nd century B.C. to the 2-3rd century A.D., on which the figure or symbol of Skanda is represented. Among these the most advanced and well known martial clans were the Audumbaras and the Yaudheyas, who issued their own currency. In order to understand fully the significance of this fact it is necessary to note that the single deity with staff and pot represented on ancient punchmarked coins is to be identified most probably as Skanda<sup>6</sup>. It has been usually observed that the punchmarked coins were locally issued, and no wonder in some cases the issuers were such regional tribal authorities<sup>7</sup>.

How the charge of the office of plunderers and soldiers was transferred to Skanda is not difficult to understand. When Rudra, the approved lord of all Āyudhajīvi tribes in general, was in subsequent literature transformed into Śiva, and Skanda was conceived as a prominent deity of the Śaiva pantheon, some of the traits associated with the malevolent Rudra came to be connected with Skanda.

<sup>1</sup> Barth, *Religions of India*, p. 162.

<sup>2</sup> VS. 16. 25-6.

<sup>3</sup> *Lāṭyāyana Ś.S.* 8.6.7; Patañjali, 5.2.21.

<sup>4</sup> Āyudhajīvi, or Śastropajīvi.

<sup>5</sup> Āyudhajīvi-kṣatriyādi-pracurāḥ; Agrawala, *India as known to Pāṇini*, p. 434.

<sup>6</sup> *Infra*, Ch. IV.

<sup>7</sup> The Vrātyas were non-Brāhmanical western tribes comprised of Yaudhas or warriors. (Weber, *History of Indian Literature*, p. 78; to which the *Vedic Index* agrees). They were, no doubt, bands of war-like half-savages, but their one noted merit was their unmarried life (*Brahmacarya*) which is particularly hinted in the Vrātya Book of the AV. (Bloomfield, M., *The AV. and the Gopatha Br.*, p. 94). As we have shown Kumārahood has to do much with bachelorhood (*supra*, p. 13).



From the low status of a marauding-deity, yet popular by the nature, how the king-of-rogues was elevated to the exalted office of the commander-in-chief of gods is an episode better explained in the light of the history of such martial clans, like the Yaudheyas and Audumbaras. In fact, their gradual establishment as ideal republican states (Sanghas) appreciated the position of their temporal as well as spiritual lord. Again, the importance of the part played in the sublimation of Skanda by the members of his own cult cannot be minimised.

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## CHAPTER III

## SKANDA IN EPIC PERIOD

Due to the vast ranges of time and space in the formulation of the epic data we naturally meet with some incongruities, but they can be explained and understood with reference to an integration, that is also observed in the epics, and that was evolved through the ages. In the great epic, we come across Kumāra, the son of Agni, a deity originated inside the Aryan fold, Skanda (a name of indefinite origin), perhaps an ogrish being of very humble birth. Śaṇmukha and Viśākha of similar nature, Guha, a hilly spirit or a mysterious god, and Kārttikeya, a constellar concept. They all are fused together to form one mighty god, who is represented as having been adopted by mothers and Rudra-Śiva as their son, as leader and lord by numerous demonic *grahas*, as husband by Śrī-Lakṣmī-Śaṣṭhī-Devasenā. He is given recognition by Ṛsis, Brahmā, Indra and felicitated by all gods who offered him presents and installed him in the generalship of divine army.

The *Gītā*<sup>1</sup> recognises him as the chief of army leaders. When promoted to the position of divine commander-in-chief and conceived as the war-god, he almost equalled in rank the ancient gods. Hopkins has observed that, "He is not mentioned enough in the early epic to indicate that he is important, but, as is the case with Durgā, when exploited he is lauded *ad nauseam*. This too looks as if he were not a late addition to the epic but a god rapidly increasing in importance, as the epic expanded, or more particularly as the Śiva-cult expanded<sup>2</sup>."

In the study of Skanda in epics, one becomes from the very beginning aware of confused and inconsistent statements about Skanda's birth and fostering. The evidence about Skanda in the *Mahābhārata* is the richest and presents several strands coming from different earlier sources. The problem of the debated origin of Skanda was present before the epic writer to which an eclectic answer was furnished as follows :

<sup>1</sup> Mbh. 6.32.24.

<sup>2</sup> Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 227.



Some explain him as son of Pitāmaha, Sanatkumāra, eldest born of Brahman ;

Some say he is son of Maheśvara ;

Some say he is son of Agni (Vibhāvasū) ;

Some say he is son of Umā ;

Some say he is son of the Kṛttikās (Pleiads) ;

Some say he is son of Gaṅgā.<sup>1</sup> (9.46.98f., Bombay).

Eventually here is an assemblage of the six beliefs or cults about the origin of Skanda. To an all-accepting devotee, Skanda was declared son of Agni, of Kṛttikās, of Rudra and of Gaṅgā at one and the same time, since he, the graceful lord Guha, endued himself with all mystifications<sup>2</sup>. But this was a commonplace engima and every man, though not suspicious about the authenticity, yet anxious to learn all in detail, desired like Yudhiṣṭhira to be enlightened on the points, who asked, "How was Kumāra born ? How did he come to be known as the son of Agni and how was he begotten by Rudra, Gaṅgā, and the Kṛttikās<sup>3</sup>?"

The story of Skanda, in the *Mahābhārata*, is to be divided into two main parts, the first relating to his birth and the second describing his nurture by various deities. It is curious that his parents, Rudra and Umā respectively in the guise of Agni and Svāhā, leave the infant child unprotected and uncared for. Some other agencies like the Kṛttikās, Gaṅgā, or mothers have to come to do his upbringing. About his origin, we find in the epics, diverse accounts varying in details, but they reveal mainly two versions of the story, one earlier and the second, more or less, modified edition of the first under Śaivite influence. In the first and earlier narrative, the fire-god is held directly responsible for the birth of Skanda ; while in the other Rudra-Śiva is given all the credit, though the name of Agni is still continued in some way or the other.

<sup>1</sup> केचिदेनं व्यवस्यन्ति पितामहसुतं प्रभुम् ।

सनत्कुमारं सर्वेषां ब्रह्मयोनिं तमग्रजम् ॥९८॥

केचिन्महेश्वरसुतं केचित्पुत्रं विभावसोः ।

उमायाः कृत्तिकानां च गङ्गायाश्च वदन्त्युत ॥९९॥

<sup>2</sup> आग्नेयः कृत्तिकापुत्रो रौद्रो गाङ्गेय इत्यपि ।

श्रूयते भगवान्देवः सर्वगुह्यमयो गुहः ॥ 1.27.13

<sup>3</sup> कुमारश्च यथोत्पन्नो यथा चाग्नेः सुतोऽभवत् ।

यथा रुद्राच्च संभूतो गङ्गायां कृत्तिकासु च ॥ 3.207.4



In the Ādiparva, Kumāra is represented as the son of Agni<sup>1</sup>. His names like Āgneya<sup>2</sup>, Agniya, Vahnisuta<sup>3</sup> disclose this association. The fire-god himself was designated in view of this fact as Kumārasū<sup>4</sup>.

*Birth of Skanda from Agni :*

That Agni sired Skanda is described in detail by Mārkaṇḍeya in the Vanaparva.<sup>5</sup> But, peculiarly enough, Agni as well as his son Skanda are here called *Adbhuta*<sup>6</sup>. As we have already seen, *Adbhuta* is a name for Agni in the *R̥gveda*<sup>7</sup>. In the *Mahābhārata*<sup>8</sup>, *Adbhuta* fire is said to be the son of waters, and the prince and the regent of the sky and the lord of everything. The *Mahābhārata* explicitly states that the *Adbhuta* Agni mentioned here is the one invoked in Vedic hymns by the seers. This points to the Vedic tradition in the birth of Skanda from Agni. Having seen the wives of the Seven Ṛṣis Agni fell in love with them. Assuming the form of the Gārhapatya fire he being unable to rouse their passion went to the forest to put an end to his life. Svāhā, the daughter of Dakṣa, who smitten in vain with love for *Adbhuta* assumed successively forms of six of the wives of the Seven Ṛṣis, and mated six times with Agni. The seed of Agni she cast away on the top of the mountain Śveta, where it developed into Skanda with six heads, etc.

The White Mountain appears to be a name for the Himālayas. The *Śaravaṇa*, a thicket of reeds, which is often described the birth-place of Skanda, seems to have been somewhere in the same region. It is said that the White Mountain together with the place called *Śaravaṇa* was created by Agni, with assistance of Vāyu through Śiva's seed<sup>9</sup>. This was the same place in the Himālayas where Iḍa became a woman<sup>10</sup>. The narrative in 9.35-46 tells that the Ganges cast the seed of Śiva on Himavat, where it produced Skanda who lay on the golden stump of a reed (*Śarastamba* of gold). Curiously enough *Śaravaṇa* was also name of the place where Maṅkhali Gosāla, the founder-teacher of the Ājīvika

<sup>1</sup> Mbh. 1.60.23 (Poona).

<sup>2</sup> Mbh. 3.232.3 (Bombay).

<sup>3</sup> *Rāmāyaṇa*, 7.4.34.

<sup>4</sup> Mbh. 2.41.44 (Bombay).

<sup>5</sup> Mbh. 3.213ff.

<sup>6</sup> *Adbhutasyādbhutam putram*, Mbh. 3.213.2.

<sup>7</sup> *Supra*, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> Mbh. 3.213.

<sup>9</sup> Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 105.

<sup>10</sup> R. 7.63.14, and 87.



sect, was born or found<sup>1</sup>. Prof. Basham points out the possibility of these stories of birth in the thicket of reeds being as instances of the Moses-in-the-bull-rushes. This fact in connection with Skanda might as well show the obscurity surrounding his birth.

As Agni was Skanda's father, Svāhā, regularly recognised as the wife of Agni, became his mother. As the story tells Skanda was born of her. Accordingly Skanda was named Svāheya,<sup>2</sup> the son of Svāhā. But as she had to assume the form of the wives of the six of the seven sages (except that of Arundhati), they also came to be known as his mothers<sup>3</sup>.

Yet another tradition related Skanda with the Kṛttikās, perhaps through Agni. As their son, he got names like Kārttikeya, Kṛttikāputra, etc. The Pleiads were considered the asterism of Agni as early as the *Atharvaveda*<sup>4</sup>. The *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* says, "Kṛttikās are the most numerous of asterisms. Agni, doubtless, is their mate, and it is with Agni that Kṛttikās have intercourse<sup>5</sup>." In the epic also the Kṛttikās are a 'seven-headed' asterism and Agni is their divinity<sup>6</sup>.

#### *Skanda and the Kṛttikās :*

Skanda's fostering by the Kṛttikās is explained in the *Rāmāyaṇa* 1.37.28, and the *Mahābhārata* 9.43-46 (Bombay). As the child was left alone uncared for by all, the Kṛttikās appearing on the scene took care of it out of motherly affection and fed it milk from their breasts. They are nowhere stated in the epic as having taken active part in the birth of Skanda from their womb. However, on this point there is some confusion in the particular passage<sup>7</sup> since the sensual indulgence of the fire-god with the Kṛttikās is said to have taken place on the White Mountain, the place of Skanda's birth.

Hopkins observes yet another fact. "As the association of six-faced Skanda with the six mother-stars seems as old a trait as any, may it be well to derive the name Kārttikeya from the stars themselves, who are the divinity of

<sup>1</sup> Basham, A.L., *History and Doctrines of the Ājīvikas*, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> *Kārttikeyastava* : 3.232.6 (Bombay).

<sup>3</sup> Mbh. 3.219.1-6.

<sup>4</sup> *Agneḥ Kṛttikāḥ*, AV. 29.7.2; TB. 1.5.1.1.; *Kṛttikānakashatramagnirdevatā*, TS. 4.4.10(1); *Āgneyiḥ Kṛttikāḥ*, MS. 1.6.9; SB. 2.1.2.1.

<sup>5</sup> SB. 2.1.2.5.

<sup>6</sup> Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 105-6.

<sup>7</sup> Mbh. 3.218.27.



the sword (War) and regents directly of war, as well as those who govern the month when war begins<sup>1</sup>." However, he suggested elsewhere that the warrior trait of Agni was now transferred to his new representative, Skanda as the chief battle-god<sup>2</sup>. Earlier evidences mentioning Agni as divine army-leader, as we have noted before<sup>3</sup>, make it more probable that in achieving the status of a war-god Skanda got help also from the kindred mythological traditions gathered around Agni.

However, the story<sup>4</sup> continues to describe Skanda's episode. Svāhā on the first lunar day had thrown six times into the lake the seed of Agni. Only in four days it grew as a boy with sun-like refulgence, and showed his mighty prowess making terrible roars and discharging arrows and mace in the direction of Śveta and Krauñcha mountains. Frightened and troubled in mind persons of various orders became his followers and the earth and mountains bowed before him. All creatures celebrated the worship of Skanda on the fifth day of the lunar month.

When he was born (Ch. 215), terrific portents were seen everywhere. Ṛṣis tried to restore tranquility in the universe, but in vain. As his prowess remained unbearable to the gods they asked Indra to kill him. But he dared not attack Skanda; then the great mothers of the universe were sent to kill him, but on the contrary they adopted him as their son and let him suck their breasts.

When numerous Grahas, Upa-grahas, Ṛṣis, Mothers and various Gaṇas waited on Mahāsena, now being really doubtful of his position Indra himself attacked Mahāsena with a view to slay him and struck him with his thunder-bolt. It pierced only right side of his body. A youth, named Viśākha and other numerous male and female children were born, who were a constant horror and pest to young boys.

The epic says (Ch. 218), the goddess of fortune came and rendered her allegiance to Skanda, adorned with various golden ornaments, dressed in a red garment, who looked very handsome, endowed with all good characteristics, and was the favourite of the three worlds. This is clearly indicative of the fact that a red-eyed, sharp-toothed and fierce-looking kindred deity was being trans-

<sup>1</sup> Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 230; see also pp. 105-6.

<sup>4</sup> Hopkins, *Religions of India*, p. 354.

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Vanaparva, 214.12ff.



formed into a high-souled dignified god. Skanda, in the form of a lower deity seems to have been elevated in rank by his association with Śrī-Lakṣmī. This finds a surprising corroboration from the relief-scene on the *Kukkuṭadhvaṇa* found at Lala Bhagat site near Kanpur. The short epigraph saying '*Kumāra-varasa*<sup>1</sup>—', and the nearby found stone figure of a cock which actually once surmounted the pillar, and which is also depicted in relief on the pillar, show beyond doubt that this was a column with a cock-capital raised in honour of Skanda. In the lower part of the carving, Lakṣmī standing amidst lotuses and bathed by elephants is shown with upraised right hand showering her blessings on the pilaster carved on her right, surmounted by a cock evidently symbolical representation of Skanda.

Then the author of the epic story gives an exalted finale to the Skanda-Indra conflict. Brahmins and Ṛṣis praised and requested him to accept the office of Indra. Indra himself approached him in modesty making humbly the same offer. But, at the request of Skanda Indra retained his sovereignty, and, with all the gods anointed Skanda as the leader of the celestial forces, and placed the golden celestial wreath made by Viśvakarmā around his neck. Thus on the office of divine generalissimo full merger of the two conceptions, one of Indra of old, and the second of promising Skanda, took place.

This story when properly analysed reveals the gradual elevation of Skanda from a humble status to the position of commander-in-chief of the divine army : as it was conceived by the epic thinkers with a view to give an integrated form to several legendary myths. But, at any rate, Śiva had not yet come in the picture until Skanda was honoured by creatures of various orders, by mothers, Ṛṣis, Goddess Śrī, Indra and others. After good fortune had smiled on Skanda and he was anointed as divine army leader, there came Rudra with his consort Pārvatī and honoured him with a joyous heart. Here abruptly the epic writer introduces the story of Skanda being the son of Rudra and supports it with a number of arguments. Because the fire-god was called Rudra by Brāhmaṇas or the Brāhmaṇa texts ; because in guise of Agni and Svāhā, Rudra and Pārvatī begot Skanda, because the White Mountain was formed of Rudra's *semen virile*, and because Rudra was seen by all heavenly dwellers to heap honours on the excellent Guha, he came to be known as the son of Rudra<sup>2</sup>. Elsewhere, Skanda

<sup>1</sup> अभजत्पद्मरूपाश्रीः स्वयमेव शरीरिणी ।

श्रिया जुष्टः पृथुयशः स कुमारवरस्तदा ॥

<sup>2</sup> Mbh. 3.218.27-30.

3.218.4 (Poona) ; also 9.44.31 (Bombay.)



himself was advised by Prajāpati to approach Maheśvara and recognise in him his father, who coalescing with Agni and Umā with Svāhā had combined to beget him<sup>1</sup>.

Whatever may have been the original idea behind the identity of Agni and Rudra as a metaphysical doctrine, it is evident that Skanda was deliberately assimilated in the important Rudra cult by accepting as son of Rudra-Śiva.

Another passage<sup>2</sup> says that once surrounded by his glorious attendants and paraphernalia, Śiva with Pārvatī was moving in his chariot. Skanda followed the lord of the gods. And then Mahādeva asked him to take command of the seventh army corps of the celestial forces, which he accepted respectfully and was advised by Rudra always to look up to him (Śiva) and by his devotion to him he (Skanda) would attain pre-eminence.

In fact, when Skanda was fully accepted in the Śaiva pantheon the story of the *birth* was grafted again. In 9.43-46 (Bombay) it is narrated as follows :

In the days of yore Maheśvara's energy being dissipated fell on fire who could not bear it, but it on the other hand, enhanced Agni's power. At the words of Brahmā, he flung it as seed into Gaṅgā. She also being unable to bear the divine seed washed it away upon Himavat, adored by the celestials. Meanwhile, the six Kṛttikās seeing that puissant child, lying on a clump of reeds, out of affection nursed him, who developed six mouths to suck them. Apsarasas danced about the child and the gods adored him, as Bṛhaspati performed the birth-rites. The Fourfold Veda and Dhanur-veda and Music attended him. He approached Rudra in the form of Skanda ; Umā, as Viśākha ; Agni, as Śākha ; Gaṅgā, as Naigameya ; thus assuming four forms at the same time by his Yoga power. Brahmā, prostrated by Rudra, Umā, Agni and Gaṅgā, bestowed on him the office of generalissimo over all beings, and he was consecrated on the Sarasvatī.

Skanda and Śiva were connected closely on account of the general agreement in their nature too. Both were conceived in one of their aspects originally as mountain divinities. The identical nature in general and names of their followers in some cases indicate their close association. Skanda was the leader of one of the Gaṇas of Rudra, and the suggestion of Prof. R. G. Bhandarkar appears quite sound when he says that "His (Skanda's) being the leader of the army of the gods was an idea probably suggested by his being the leader of a Gaṇa of Rudra."

<sup>1</sup> Mbh. 3.220.8-9.

<sup>2</sup> Mbh. 3.221.1ff.



The *Mahābhārata* gives the native explanation for it. It is said that Skanda was surrounded by numerous fierce-looking cannibals and demons. They were considered by the people as produced from Rudra's semen which was scattered in five portions over the earth<sup>1</sup>. But naturally that is why, Skanda's fatherhood was ascribed to Rudra. This points to the general tendency of the period which associated all afflicting beings with Śiva, and Skanda representing fiery and other afflictions, became Rudra's dear son as well as leader of such beings<sup>2</sup>.

Through Śiva, Umā or Pārvatī became Skanda's mother. Gaṅgā was also his mother, as in the story, she bore the seed of Śiva to Himavat, due to her Śaiva association. The cult of mother-goddesses again is seen very intimately connected with both of them, and might have been a common basis for their mutual relationship.

As a matter of fact, in certain passages we find some epithets being shifted from Śiva to Skanda or vice versa. Śiva is Guha in Mbh. 13.17.150 (Bombay); Skanda's six faces, *Ṣaṇmukha Ṣadvaktra*, *Ṣaḍānana*, are transferred to Śiva<sup>3</sup>. The *Kārttikeyastava* passage of the Vanaparva<sup>4</sup> gives several names to Skanda which are usually titles of Śiva, such as Amogha, Anāmaya, Bhūteśa, Caṇḍa and Kāmajit. Skanda-Viśākha is an epithet of Śiva and also Viśākha<sup>5</sup>.

Among his several glorious feats is his piercing of Mts. Krauñca<sup>6</sup> and Sveta<sup>7</sup>. But he is known also as disperser of the Asura army<sup>8</sup>. In the battle described in 9.46 (Bombay ed.), Tāraka, Mahiṣa, Tripāda, Hradodara, and Bāṇa are the names of Asuras slain by Kārttikeya. Otherwise, we have no reference to Tāraka etc. (leaving Mahiṣa) in the epic as killed by Skanda except this passage, which obviously a later interpolation to the epic. But his battle with Mahiṣa is described in earlier epic, 3.231.1, and is echoed severally<sup>9</sup>. And, this appears to be a common myth shared by all Śaiva deities, as the slaying of Mahiṣa

<sup>1</sup> Mbh. 3.220.13.

<sup>2</sup> Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 229.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

<sup>4</sup> Mbh., Poona edition, Vanaparva, after Ch. 221, in the Appendix, p. 1076-7.

<sup>5</sup> Hopkins, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

<sup>6</sup> Mbh. 3.214.31.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Mbh. 7.159.32 ; 9.6.20f (Bombay).

<sup>9</sup> Sorensen, *Mbh. Conc.*, p. 458, VIII. 166.7421 ; VIII. 146 ; IX. 46.2592 of Calcutta ed.



is attributed also to Śiva<sup>1</sup> (*mahiṣaghna*) and Durgā<sup>2</sup> (*mahiṣāsura-nāśinī*). It was a new idea according to which Skanda's birth was explained as a necessity to meet the need of a leader in the Tārakāmaya war, where he crushed the enemy of god. The necessity of a separate demon to be killed by Skanda gave birth to a Tārakāsura, and their battle and Skanda's victory over him became a sublime theme in the Gupta period to exalt divine glory in its full grandeur.

#### *Mothers of Skanda :*

Still according to another tradition Skanda is the son of Revatī<sup>3</sup>. Hopkins takes her to be the wife of Kāma but on what grounds is not clear<sup>4</sup>. In Vedic literature Revatī was an auspicious fortune-giver asterism, but in due course it appears in such a close association with the mothers that they are often considered as identical. We know from the *Tāṇḍya Brāhmaṇa*, that the mothers are Revatīs<sup>5</sup>. In the Vanaparva she is a disease-demon, producing the Graha Raivata, but identified with Aditi, the archetypal mother.

Āryā was also a name of the mother of Skanda<sup>6</sup>; Vinatā was yet another<sup>7</sup>. Among the host of mothers of the world who adopted Skanda as their son at his birth and suckled him, special mention is made of the daughter of Krodha (anger) with a spike in hand, and of irascible red-coloured daughter of Lohita sea, who lived on blood<sup>8</sup>.

The mothers, daughters of the Tapa fire, also sought favour of Skanda and adopted him as their son. They, by his favour, became the mothers of the whole world. They were divided into Śiva (good) and Aśiva (evil). Their names—Kākī, Halimā, Rudrā, Bṛhālī, Āryā, Palālā, and Miśrā—show that they constituted the host of low and folk goddesses<sup>9</sup>. In the Ch. 219 a group of certain other mother-goddesses approaches Skanda and with his consent they become his mothers. These were also the folk goddesses and as they, there desirous of acquiring a high status again which they entertained as the mothers of universe

<sup>1</sup> Mbh. Calcutta ed., XIII. 905.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* IV. 193.

<sup>3</sup> *Kārttikeyastava*, Mbh. 3.232.6 (Bombay).

<sup>4</sup> Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 227.

<sup>5</sup> *Tāṇḍya Brā.* 13.9.17.

<sup>6</sup> Mbh. 3.219.40.

<sup>7</sup> Mbh. 3.219.12.

<sup>8</sup> Mbh. 3.215.20-22.

<sup>9</sup> Mbh. 3.217.6-9.



in by-gone ages before being deposed by the other prevailing group, asked permission of Skanda to devour their protected progeny and their male-lords. This evinces the hostility between two groups—one that of the higher goddesses like Brāhmī, Māheśvarī, and another that of the native mothers. The epic says that Skanda did not allow their evil motives to grow but rather ordered them to vouchsafe their protecting care to the progeny, yet, however, they were permitted to afflict human children until they attain the age of sixteen. They were given for their help by Skanda a fierce evil spirit named Skandāpasmāra, which came out of his body.

It shows that how the hostile indigenous goddesses were given due recognition in the higher religion and were reconciled with. Many of them were assimilated in the Skanda pantheon and their nature was changed from child-destroying to child-protecting.

Vinatā<sup>1</sup> is a terrific Śakuni graha. Another is Rākṣasī graha Pūtanā. The third, the fierce and terrible-looking Rākṣasa of an hideous appearance, named Śīta Pūtanā, causing abortion. Aditi is also known by the name of Revatī; her evil spirit is called Raivata, and that terrible graha also afflict children. Diti, the mother of Asuras, is called Mukhamaṇḍikā, and is very fond of the flesh of little children. There are many male and female child spirits begotten of Skanda. Surabhī, Saramā, Karañjanīlayā etc. and eighteen others of same kind are evil spirits fond of meat and wine and take up their abode in the Sūtikā-grha for ten days. Kadrū, the mother of the Gandharvas, the mother of the Apsarasas, Lohitāyanī, and Āryā are also there. Āryā acts the same part among female beings, as Rudra does among male ones. She is the mother of all children and is distinctly worshipped for their welfare. These are spirits presiding over the destinies of young children, and until children attain their sixteenth year, these spirits exercise their influence for evil, and after that for good. The whole body of male and female spirits that are described are always denominated by men as the Spirits of Skanda. They are propitiated with burnt offerings, ablutions, unguents, sacrifice and other offerings, and particularly by the worship of Skanda.

In Mbh. IX. 46. a list of Prabhāvatī etc. 192 Mātṛ- names is given and even that list is regarded incomplete; many others also were there, who became followers of Skanda. They are witches, and live in cross-roads, cemeteries, and mountains. This gives us many obscure and unfamiliar names of mothers of low and distinctly non-Aryan origin.

<sup>1</sup> Mbh. 3.219.26ff.



They are collectively called 'Mothers'. Otherwise they had their own names in different localities and sections and they were named distinctly according to their wrathful and terrible aspects which they embodied in them. It seems, that a general name given by the Buddhists to various mother-goddesses connected with children and their diseases was Hārītī, almost similar to the appellation Jāta-hārīṇī which is to be found in the *Kāśyapa Saṁhitā*<sup>1</sup>, an Āyurvedic text of the early Gupta period. According to the earlier Buddhist tradition Hārītī was the presiding deity of Rājagṛha, but in the *Mahābhārata* Jarā seems to be her original name<sup>2</sup>. The fact that her figure was painted in the midst of children on the walls of the houses of Rājagṛha shows that she was a mother-goddess fond of children<sup>3</sup>; and as such Hārītī is found depicted in the Kuṣāṇa art.

Associated again, with Skanda are male and female *Grahas*, possessors or seizers. It is said in 3.216-7 that when Śkanda was struck with the thunderbolt, a number of male children were produced who steal little children, whether born, or in the womb; and also a number of female children. They adopted Viśākha as their father, who himself was born from the pierced right side of Skanda. The adorable and dextrous Bhadrāśākha, i.e., Skanda having a face like that of goat, was surrounded by all his sons and daughters whom he guarded carefully in the presence of the great mothers. And for this reason he was called the father of Kumāras (*Kumāra-pitr*).

According to the *Suśruta Saṁhitā*<sup>4</sup>, the nine presiding deities, namely Skanda, Skandāpasmāra, Śakuni, Revatī, Pūtanā, Andhapūtanā, Śītapūtanā, Mukhamaṇḍikā, and Naigameṣa—of the nine diseases of infant life were created by the gods Agni, Mahādeva and the goddesses Kṛttikās and Umā for guarding the person of the new-born Guha. It is pointed out that through a mistake due to the identity of the names, the author of the diseases was identified with invincible Skanda. And, when the god Skanda was elevated to the leadership of the armies of heaven, these nine followers who waited upon him, now were ordered by Śiva to have their means of subsistence in the life of an infant. They were allowed particularly to attack the children of iniquitous parents so they be properly worshipped and pleased by them.

<sup>1</sup> *Kāśyapa Saṁhitā*, pp. 157f.

<sup>2</sup> Mbh. 2.16.38ff.

<sup>3</sup> Mbh. 2.17.5. (Footnote on page 94 of the Poona ed.)

<sup>4</sup> *Suśruta Saṁhitā*, Uttara tantra, Ch. XXVII.



Skanda is the foremost of the grahas and is called the Lord of the grahas<sup>1</sup>; the hymn addressed to him contains a brief, yet fuller, description of his valour<sup>2</sup> and divine resplendence. The second to him is Skandāpasasmāra, which on common authority of the *Suśruta Saṁhitā* and *Mahābhārata* is well known as Viśākha<sup>3</sup>. Śakuni, Revatī, Pūtanā, Andhapūtanā, Śītapūtanā, Mukhamaṇḍikā are the female graha companions of Skanda which names are also found in the epic. Naigamaṣa is the last and ninth<sup>4</sup> of the group which has a goat's face and is called Pitṛgraha, i.e., father of them all.

In fact, there existed a popular bucolic divinity with a goat's head, whose worship was prevalent in connection with infants. His earlier references we have discussed before. In the epic at one place we are informed that Agni transformed himself into Naigameya with Chāgavaktra to amuse Skanda. But elsewhere he is a form of Skanda (9.4.4.2467, Calcutta), or son or brother (1.66.24, Hopkins, p. 227). In Ch. 217, Bhadrāśākha, with a face like that of a goat, and guarding his sons and daughters as father, a form of Skanda, appears none other than him. Again, we are reminded by the epic writer that the sixth face of Skanda was like that of a goat; the head by which he created the divine energy, is reputed to be the best of all his heads<sup>5</sup>. Of course, in the Kuṣāṇa art of Mathurā we have several images of a goat-headed deity one of which is actually labelled *Bhagavā Nemeso*, confirming his popular worship as the deity of child-birth in that period. Fortunately, the Jaina tradition also supports this, as we shall see later<sup>6</sup>.

#### *Skanda and Devasenā :*

Skanda's consort is Devasenā. From 3.213.16,20 we know that she was a daughter of Prajāpati Kāśyapa and a sister of Daityasenā. Indra liberated her from Keśin who ravished her. Her mother was sister of Indra's mother, a daughter of Dakṣa. Indra sought a husband for Devasenā, and when Skanda was born and had conquered the world in six days, presented her to the youthful god. Bṛhaspati performed their marriage. She is Skanda's queen and is variously called as Śaṣṭhī, Lakṣmī, Āśā, Sukhapradā, Sinivālī, Kuhū, Sadvṛtti,

<sup>1</sup> नमः स्कन्दाय देवाय ग्रहाधिपतये नमः, SS.UT.27.

<sup>2</sup> Note that Tāraka etc. demons are not mentioned here also.

<sup>3</sup> SS. UT., XXIX. 2, XXXVII. 1; Mbh. 3.219.25 together with 3.216.13 and 3.217.10.

<sup>4</sup> Also in the Mbh. 3.217.11f.

<sup>5</sup> Roy, *Mbh. Tarnslation*, Vol. III, p. 491.

<sup>6</sup> *Infra*, Ch. IV.



Aparājītā. Śrī-pañcamī is the blessed fifth day on which Śrī in person blessed him, and the sixth day is also his great day, Mahātithi, because he then accomplished his aim<sup>1</sup>.

We have a very remarkable ceremony called *Ṣaṣṭhī-kalpa* described in the *Mānava G.S.* (2.13). But, as is observed by Prof. Gonda, in the text 'the author imperceptibly proceeds to commingle Ṣaṣṭhī's individuality with that of Śrī, quoting the Śrīsūkta'<sup>2</sup>. This shows that Ṣaṣṭhī was here identified with Śrī-Lakṣmī, the goddess of fortune and prosperity; figuratively their blending means elevation in the position of Ṣaṣṭhī, which latter appears to be a personified deity of the sixth-day of the child-birth. She is connected in the *Kauṣītaki G.S.* 19.7, *Baudhāyana P.* 4.2. with new-born children<sup>3</sup>. Her name occurs very close to Skanda just after but one, in the list of deities to whom oblations were made<sup>4</sup>. But here in the epic, Sinīvālī and Kuhū are divinities representing the first and the latter part of the new moon day<sup>5</sup>. They are one with Ṣaṣṭhī the lucky sixth day after birth. Āśā (Hope), Sukhapradā (Giver of good), Aparājītā<sup>6</sup> (Unconquered), and Sadvṛtti (Good Nature) are the other complementary names of the same.

As she selected Skanda as her lord, the latter became Devasenāpati. One of the epithets of Skanda is Ṣaṣṭhipriya, i.e., beloved of Ṣaṣṭhī<sup>7</sup>, and another Devasenāpriya<sup>8</sup> pointing to the identity of Ṣaṣṭhī with Devasenā<sup>9</sup>.

The goddess with six faces on the Yaudheya coins is rightly identified by Dr. Agrawala with Ṣaṣṭhī as Ṣaṇmukhī corresponding to the depiction of Skanda as Ṣaṇmukha. The usual standing goddess found on the reverse of several tribal coin series is identified as Śrī-Lakṣmī, and in our humble opinion she may be better representing Devasenā-Lakṣmī as having association with Skanda on the other side.

<sup>1</sup> Mbh. 3.218.49; Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> Gonda, J., *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, p. 218.

<sup>3</sup> Sinīvālī is explicitly Viṣṇu's consort in AV. 7.46.3, and she is indeed concerned with child-birth in RV. 10.184.2, AV. 14.2.15, 31 (also *Mantra Brāhmaṇa*, 1.4.7).

<sup>4</sup> *Baudhāyana D.S.* 2.5.9.8; *Agniveśya G.S.* 2.6.3 :26.

<sup>5</sup> Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 70.

<sup>6</sup> Skanda is also called Aparājita, 3.220.9; *supra*, p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> Mbh. 3.232.6.

<sup>8</sup> Mbh. 3.232.8.

<sup>9</sup> Agrawala, V.S., "Goddess Ṣaṣṭhī on the Yaudheya coins," JNSI, Vol. IV, Pt. II, p. 2.



Skanda's another significant aspect, yet to be considered, is that of Sanatkumāra. In the *Mahābhārata* Sanatkumāra, Brahmaṛṣi, son of Brahmā, present as Yogācārya in the palace of Brahmā, incarnate as Pradyumna, is a great sage identified by some with Skanda<sup>1</sup>.

Skanda is no doubt designated as Brahmanya in the epic, but never as Subrahmanya (a later Southern epithet). He is born from Brahman (*Brahmaja*), sleeps in Brahman (*Brahmeśaya*) and also knows Brahman (*Brahmavit*)<sup>2</sup>. His other, rather own epithets, indicative of his own form and activities are, *śiśu* (babe), *bālakrīḍanakapriya* (fond of toys), *Ṣaṇmukha* or *Ṣaḍānana* (six-faced), *Mayūraketu* (peacock-bannered), *Dipta-śakti* (wielder of the blazing lance) etc.

His symbolical number is six ; he has six mothers in Rṣipatnīs or Kṛttikās, six heads, six rays (*Ṣaḍarcis*)<sup>3</sup>; his wife is *Ṣaṣṭhī*; his favourite is the sixth day.

He is described as clad in red clothes (3.218.31). His special colour is red. His cock presented by Agni is red (3.218.32). His banner is of red colour (3.220.19).

He holds in his hand a mighty lance called *Śakti*. It is said to have been given by Agni with which he splits the Krauñca hill (9.46.64) ; but elsewhere (9.44) that is given by Indra ; or appeared before him itself (3.229). According to the passage, in 13.228.8f., he threw his dart on Himavat and challenged all beings to draw it up or at least to shake it. *Prahlāda* failed ; *Viṣṇu* could shake it ; none could brandish it.

The red cock given to him by Agni forms his ensign or banner (3.218.32). But elsewhere (7.105.17) the peacock appears to be his battle-emblem. Among the gifts given by the gods at his birth : *Garuḍa* gave him a peacock ; *Aruṇa* gave him a cock of sharp talons ; *Varuṇa*, a snake ; the moon, a sheep ; *Rākṣasas*, a boar and buffalo ; *Agni*, a goat, etc.

Other things given on the occasion were a banner (by *Indra*), a large army (by *Śiva*), a triumphal garland (by *Viṣṇu*), two pieces of cloth (by *Umā*), a celestial waterpot (by *Gaṅgā*), a black deer-skin (by *Brahmā*), etc<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Sorensen, *Mbh. Con.*, on Sanatkumāra, p. 516.

<sup>2</sup> *Kārttikeyastava*, 3.232 (Bombay).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Mbh.* 9.45. (Bombay) ; Sorensen, *Mahābhārata Concordance*, p. 642.



## III. SKANDA IN EPIC PERIOD

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He was also given by different gods numerous attendants<sup>1</sup>. Similarly the Sādhyas, Rudras, Vasus, Pitṛs, Seas, Rivers and Mountains gave him many combatant army-chiefs. In the latter list Kṛṣṇa and Hari as servants of Skanda betray a sectarian touch<sup>2</sup>.

Tīrthas sacred to him are : Auśanasa (3.81.117), Pṛthūdaka (3.81.122), Aujasa or Taijasa (3.81.143), Koṭitīrtha (3.62.68), Sthāṇutīrtha (Calcutta ed., 9.42.4364), Somākhyatīrtha (Calcutta ed 9.43.2448-9), Samantapañcaka (Sorensen, p. 640).

<sup>1</sup> Mbh. 9.45.30f. For the list see Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 230. Hopkins observes on p. 145 (*ibid.*): "Kubera, his follower, as well as one of Skanda's, are called Dhanada (5.111.11 etc.). There is a close connection between these followers of Kubera and Skanda. Another of Skanda's is called Vasuda, another even has Kubera's name, Piṅgākṣin." See also Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>2</sup> Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 231.



## CHAPTER IV

## EARLY ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA ON SKANDA CULT

Wide prevalence of the cult-worship of Skanda is well corroborated by the archaeological evidence which begins a century or so before the Christian era. The earliest depiction of Skanda, recognisable with some certainty is on the ancient tribal coins coming from the areas of Eastern Panjab, Ujjayinī, Rohtak and Ayodhyā. Particularly the legend on Yaudheya coins leaves no doubt about the identity of the deity represented on them.

We have also a standing human figure of a deity depicted on certain punch-marked coins. But the identification of that in want of epigraphic evidence is hardly conclusive, though comparative analysis of certain iconographic traits may be of help.

On punchmarked coins, "Representations of the human figures or of deities are rare but are occasionally found."<sup>1</sup> The most remarkable of them all is the single human figure, or a deity in anthropomorphic form, with a pot and shaft in his two hands and a crest-like thing on the head (*Fig. 1*). An identical figure to this is found on the copper coins attributed to Ujjayinī (*Fig. 3*). Allan thinks that 'this enables us to identify the figure as Kārttikeya, who appears six-headed on some coins of Ujjayinī and may therefore be recognised in the other forms in which he appears there'.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Banerjea identifies it as Śiva, because he sees better possibilities for all other Ujjayinī depictions as being that of Śiva-



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

1—2. From punchmarked coins.

3. From Ujjayinī coins.

Mahākāla. Dr. Moti Chandra also thinks that the human figure, holding a staff and a pot, is Śiva, since the flask and staff are connected with Śiva in literature and iconography.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Allan, *BMC. Ancient India*, p. xxxvi.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxxvi.

<sup>3</sup> JNSI, XVI, p. 8,



This human figure found on certain punchmarked coins and (Allan's) Class 2, vars. f and g of Ujjayinī coins, standing facing left or right, invariably holds in his left hand a staff and in the right a thing resembling vase or purse. Perhaps it is difficult to identify it as a shield because the fashion in which it is held appears somewhat different from that. Another remarkable feature of the figure to be noted, is a crest-like thing appearing on the head. No scholar has taken cognisance of it upto now, though it is a peculiar feature of the representation. It seems to be the crest of warrior's helmet. If so, it would be an additional point suggesting this to be a warrior-deity.

On the reverse of the punchmarked coins, Allan observes, "the only representation of the human figure is a little figure of deity holding a staff and bag (No. 30), who is perhaps the same as No. 3 (on the obverse);<sup>1</sup> who is probably Kārttikeya but the two figures are not quite identical."<sup>2</sup> The indication for the crest can be seen in the oblong dot, bent rightward showing head of the figure. (Fig. 2).

The Ujjayinī coins which depict the deity in profile in punchmarked fashion appear rather earlier. (Figs. 3-4). On others (Class 2 of Allan) we have a more evolved representation of a deity illustrated frontally. (Fig. 5). It has been described as a deity 'standing facing, holding spear<sup>3</sup> in r. and uncertain bag-like object in l.'<sup>4</sup> Allan identified him as Kārttikeya since it holds a spear.<sup>5</sup>



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

4-6. From Ujjayinī coins.

The three heads of a deity occurring on Ujjayinī coins were taken by Allan depicting partially six heads of Kārttikeya, though he also considered the possibility of its being Mahākāla-Siva. (Fig. 6). The absence of any Śaiva symbol,

<sup>1</sup> Our Pl. No. I, a.

<sup>2</sup> Allan, *op. cit.* xxxix.

<sup>3</sup> This was described by Cunningham as Sun-standard but as rightly pointed out by Banerjea the solar symbol is not joined to the staff. Our Pl. II, a-c.

<sup>4</sup> Allan, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. cxlii-iii.



like trident and the presence of two arms led him to conclude it as the representation of Skanda. However, Dr. Banerjea controverted it. So far as the identification of the deity with a trident<sup>1</sup> standing by the side of a bull, occurring on another variety of Ujjayinī coins is concerned, Dr. Banerjea may be right. But on the basis of this identification it would not be justifiable to identify the other depictions as Śiva despite all the dissimilarities of attributes and forms of the deities.

A similar standing figure holding a spear in right hand is found on the coins of Audumbaras<sup>2</sup> and on one of the Kāṇḍa coin pieces. Allan takes it to be Kārttikeya, or simply a warrior. It is interesting to note that one Ajāmita (Skt. Āryāmitra) of Audumbara coins shows affinity to Āryā, one of the mother-names of Skanda.<sup>3</sup>

Identification of the deity on many Yaudheya coins of Class III (of Allan) is beyond doubt Skanda since he is shown in a polycephalous manner, i.e., with six-heads as Ṣaṇmukha, which is a special characteristic of Skanda's mythological personality. Again a surer support is the legend found on them.

The characteristic obverse of the silver and copper coins of this class is six-headed Kārttikeya, with only two arms, holding spear (Śakti) in right, and the left akimbo. The figure is conceived frontally. He is also found shown single-headed on a variety of the same series,<sup>4</sup> but his special emblem (Śakti) is invariably there. Allan,<sup>5</sup> as well as Smith, have noticed also an aureole round the head.

On the reverse of this coin series a standing goddess is found depicted, but either single-headed or six-headed. (*Figs. 7-12*). The single-headed goddess is identified by scholars as Lakṣmī.<sup>6</sup> Six heads of the reverse figure were recognised by Cunningham for the first time.<sup>7</sup> Smith also describes in his *Catalogue* of the Indian Museum on reverse of the coins a 'six-headed goddess standing on lotus facing, etc.'<sup>8</sup> Though Allan had also one coin of similar reverse,

<sup>1</sup> It is quite clearly a trident, but not noted as such by Dr. Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> Allan, *op. cit.*, pp. lxxxvi, 125-7.

<sup>3</sup> See above, pp. 30-31.

<sup>4</sup> Allan, *op. cit.*, Class III, Var. b, p. 272.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*; Smith, *IMC.*, p. 182.

<sup>6</sup> Allan, *op. cit.*, p. cxlix; Banerjea, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

<sup>7</sup> Cunningham, *Coins of Ancient India*, p. 78.

<sup>8</sup> Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 181, SN. 8-15, 17.



yet he took it to be Kārttikeya with changed position;<sup>1</sup> but from the plate, reproduced by him, breasts of the figure are evident.<sup>2</sup> But the significance of the six-headed goddess on Yaudheya coins was for the first time pointed out and emphasised by Dr. V.S. Agrawala in his article based on the Dehra Dun hoard of Yaudheya coins.<sup>3</sup>

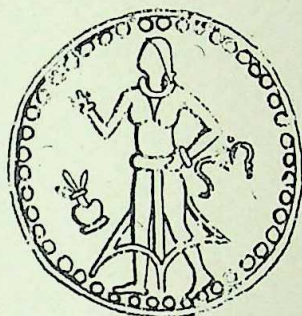


Fig. 7

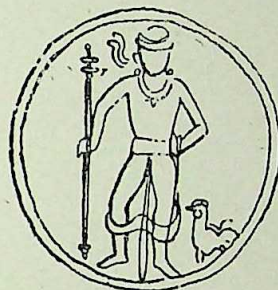


Fig. 8

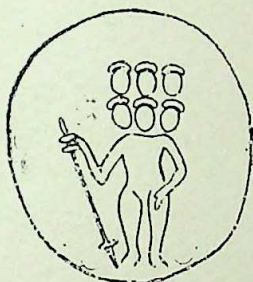


Fig. 9



Fig. 10

7-8. Single-headed god and goddess. See also Pl. II d-f.

9-10. Six-headed god and goddess. From Yaudheya coins. After V. S. Agrawala, JNSI, Vol. V,

Pt. II, p. 1.

He says, 'there is a variety of these coins representing on obverse the six-headed god Kārttikeya, and on reverse a corresponding goddess with six heads.'

She is identified by him as Śaṣṭhī of literature, who according to the *Mahābhārata* is Devasenā, the wife of Skanda<sup>4</sup>. Not only this, as we have seen, she is Lakṣmī herself<sup>5</sup>. And we would feel rather no difficulty in identifying

<sup>1</sup> Allan, *op. cit.*, p. cl.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pl. XL.

<sup>3</sup> JNSI, Vol. V, Pt. II, p. 1-4.

<sup>4</sup> *Supra*, pp. 34-5.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*



the single-headed goddess on other Yaudheya coins as Devasenā-Lakṣmī, i.e., Devasenā as Lakṣmī.

The legend read by Allan on his unique silver specimen<sup>1</sup> of Yaudheya coins was भागवत-स्वामिनो-ब्रह्मण्य-यौवेय, which he wanted to be arranged as यौवेय-भागवत-स्वामिनो ब्रह्मण्य (स or स्य), which according to him would mean, 'Of Brahmanya (a name of Kārttikeya), the divine lord of the Yaudheyas'. However, the legend on other coins he deciphered : भागवत-स्वामिनो-ब्रह्मण्यदेवस्य (or स) कुमारस्य (or स), meaning 'Of Kumāra, the divine lord Brahmanya-deva'. Dr. Banerjea on his close examination of the problem and coins amended the reading भागवत to भगवतः or भगवतो, and accordingly translated, 'Of (really, "coin of") the worshipful lord Brahmanya-deva Kumāra'. Thus both the scholars refuted the previous theory of taking Brahmanya (deva) as the name of a Yaudheya king<sup>2</sup>.

Rohitaka, modern Rohtak, was a seat of Yaudheya power in the beginning of the Christian era as is evidenced by the discovery of the Yaudhaya mint site at the Khokhra Kot mound by Dr. Bir Bal Sahni<sup>3</sup>. The coins of the Yaudheyas are found in eastern Panjab, and all over the country between the Satlej and Jumna Rivers<sup>4</sup>. We know from the *Mahāmāyūrī* that the presiding deity of the country of Rohitaka was Kārttikeya-Kumāra<sup>5</sup>. The *Mahābhārata* also supports this as it is said that Rohitaka, a pleasant land, rich in cattle and corn is held dear by Kārttikeya<sup>6</sup>, and is inhabited by the Mattamayūrakas. One series of the coins also reads *Bahudhañake*, equivalent to the Sanskrit term *Bahudhānyaka*, 'rich in corn', of the *Mahābhārata*<sup>7</sup>.

Evidently, the Yaudheyas devoted special service to their god. They had dedicated their state to the god and the republic was ruled on his behalf. Dr. Banerjea thinks 'that the coins, thus were really issued in the name of the god, the spiritual as well as temporal ruler of the tribe in their times of stress and tribulation'. This happened sometime after their debacle in the hands of the great Śaka-satrap Rudradāman<sup>8</sup>. Dr. Agrawala considers the same in another

<sup>1</sup> Allan had before him only one Yaudheya coin in silver with the above legend.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 181 ; Rapson, JRAS, 1903, p. 291.

<sup>3</sup> Sahni, B. B., *The Technique of Coin casting in Ancient India*, p. 7f.

<sup>4</sup> Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

<sup>5</sup> JUPHS, Vol. XV, pl. II, pp. 27, 34.

<sup>6</sup> Mbh. 2. 29. 4-5.

<sup>7</sup> Mbh. 2. 29. 5.

<sup>8</sup> JNSI, Vol. XIII, p. 162.



context when glory of the Yaudheyas and thus of their lord was observed with solemnity after a long time. He says, 'The Yaudheyas appear to have supplanted the Kuṣāṇa rule at the end of the second century A.D. and were paramount in north Rajputana, south-east Panjab and north U.P. throughout the third century and up to the rise of the Gupta imperialism under Samudragupta'<sup>1</sup>.

The imperial Kuṣāṇa rulers adopted for their reverse coin devices numerous deities from different religions like Greek, Iranian and Indian. Skanda, under various names is represented by Huviṣka only on some of his issues.

On one of the series we have Mahāsenā, facing, nimbate and diademed, clad in coat and cloak, holds in right hand standard surmounted by bird; and his left hand rests on the hilt of the sword which is tied to his waist-girdle<sup>2</sup>. The legend is MAACHNO, which is equal to Sanskrit Mahāsenā, 'having a great army', a well known epithet of Skanda.

Still on others there appear either three names Skanda-Kumāra-Viśākha, or four names Skanda-Kumāra-Viśākha-Mahāsenā<sup>3</sup>. In the former type two male deities are found, 'standing face to face, nimbate; each wearing chlamys and necklace, and sword at waist; but Skanda (-Kumāra) holds in right hand, standard surmounted by bird; Viśākha holds in left hand, spear'<sup>4</sup>. Viśākha is shown clasping the right hand of Skanda (-Kumāra) who touches the former with his left hand<sup>5</sup>. (*Fig. 11*). One coin which has three figures, is described by Gardner as, "Niche on basis, within which, Skanda and Viśākha standing as above; between them Mahāsenā, horned (?), facing nimbate, clad in chlamys; swords at waist." (*Fig. 12*).

Prof. Bhandarkar stated that Skanda, Kumāra, Viśākha and Mahāsenā were originally four different gods, and they were represented on Kuṣāṇa coins. But, however, we do not find four figures corresponding to four different names on Huviṣka coins. We have either only two figures with three names, or three figures with four names. It is correct that Skanda was a composite figure in which several gods were blended, and as it is rightly pointed out by Dr. Banerjea, that, "Huviṣka's coins inform us that the three (or two) gods had not lost their separate personal entity even then."

<sup>1</sup> JNSI, Vol. V, Pt. II, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Gardner, BMC, p. 138; Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 144-5.

<sup>3</sup> Whitehead, PMC, p. 207.

<sup>4</sup> Gardner, BMC, pl. XXVIII. 22.

<sup>5</sup> Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 145.



As we have noted already, the tetrad of Skanda gods is mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*. But the earliest group seems to be that of Skanda and Viśākha. In the *Dadhipayādi Gaṇa* (to Pāṇini 2-4-14) we get names of deities worshipped in pairs, e.g., Śiva-Vaiśravaṇa, Skanda-Viśākha, Brahma-Prajāpati. A *vārtika* on VI-3-26 and the *Bhāṣya* of Patañjali state that this was a post-Vedic tendency<sup>1</sup>. Skanda and Viśākha appear as separate deities also in the *Skandayāga*<sup>2</sup>, Patañjali<sup>3</sup>, *Suśruta Saṁhitā*<sup>4</sup>, *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*<sup>5</sup>. In the *Mahābhārata* there is a marked tendency to treat them as one god through the myth describing the emergence of Viśākha from Skanda's person. To this pair later on were added two more names at different stages, and a tetradic aspect of Skanda deities was achieved in the last.

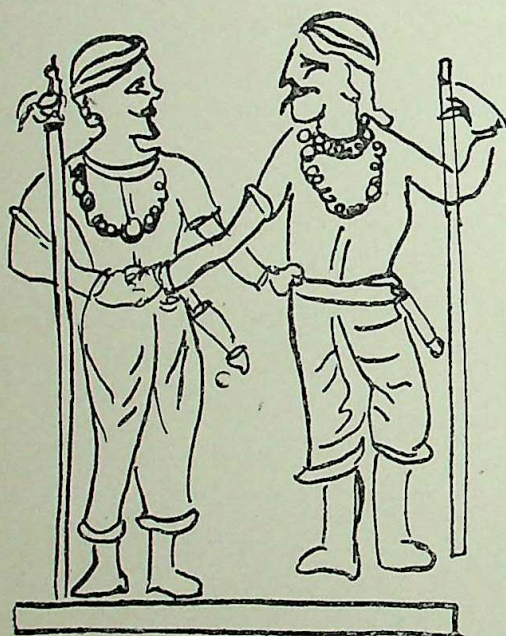


Fig. 11

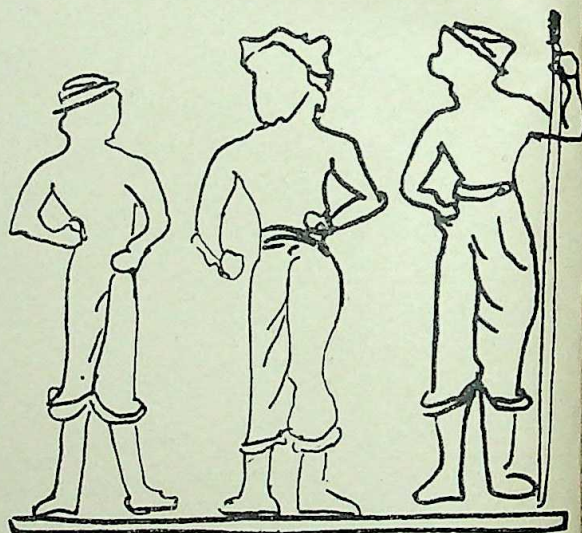


Fig. 12

11-12. From Huviṣka's coins. On reverse side. 2nd cent. A. D.

On certain other coins of the early local rulers, the symbolic representation of Skanda can also be recognised with good probability. On two series of Ayodhya

<sup>1</sup> Agrawala, *India as known to Pāṇini*, p. 363.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> *Supra*, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> *Supra*, p. 34.

<sup>5</sup> *Rāmāyaṇa*, 1. 26 ; Mbh. 3. 219. 25 together with 3. 216. 13 and 3. 213. 10. Cf. Mbh. 1. 204. 25 referring to Kārttikeya.



coins (Fig. 13) issued by the two kings Devamitra and Vijayamitra there occurs as the reverse device a symbol which has been described as 'Cock on top of post',<sup>1</sup> and is presumed by Dr. Banerjea as representing the cock-crested column of Skanda<sup>2</sup>. A figure of cock before a palm tree is also to be seen on reverse of the coins of Satyamitra, Āryāmitra and Vijayamitra<sup>3</sup>, of the same locality. (Fig. 14).



Fig. 13

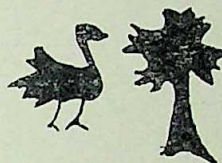


Fig. 14.

13-14 Symbolical representation of the deity from tribal coins. 2-1 st cent. B. C.

*Cock-column from Lala Bhagat (Pls. III-VI) :*

In 1927 a very remarkable red sandstone octagonal column with a cock-figure in similar stone was discovered at Lala Bhagat village near Kanpur. The cock formed the capital of it in the same way as is indicated by the cock-capital carved on the pillar itself. The carving on one of its sides shows several figures. The topmost is a couple of flying geese, below which the sun god is shown flanked by two female attendants, driving in a quadriga trampling over the demonic figure. (Pl. V). Before the chariot are two female deities preceded by a group (13 in number) of nude grotesque dwarfs with 'disproportionate faces with hideous looks and protuberant short bellies'. Just below is a dancing fan-tailed peacock; further down an elephant pulling a lotus stalk from a lotus-pond. (Pl. VI). Further below, in the end after a blank space, is exhibited a figure of Gajalakṣmī standing by the side of a cock-surmounted column based on a dwarf atlante. The goddess, looking towards the column, with her upraised right hand is as if showering divine honour on the god Skanda represented symbolically by the cock capital (Pl. IVa).

The cock was the special emblem of Skanda. This column was dedicated to Skanda, and as we have already suggested, depicts the 'story of Skanda's emergence to glory' in a symbolical way and tallies strikingly with the narrative of the Vanaparva. The significance of the solar connection of Skanda as revealed

<sup>1</sup> Smith, V. A., CCIM, Vol. I, p. 151, Nos. 29, 31, 32; Allan, BMC, *Ancient India*, pl. XVII, fig. 22

<sup>2</sup> Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 141; JISOA, Vol. V, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Allan, BMC. AI, p. 135-9.



by the relief representation of the column has been already pointed out with some emphasis<sup>1</sup>. In the Vanaparva legend, the Adbhuta fire, which produced Skanda is said to have come out of the solar orb, and as the god Skanda was born, he was shining with the sun-like divine refulgence.<sup>2</sup> The two rows of dwarfish figures were suggested by Prayag Dayal as those of Vālakhilyas. But in view of the *Mahābhārata* evidence they should be identified as representing the host of fierce, ugly, curious looking demonic beings, i.e., Grahas who attended at Skanda. The depiction is hardly like that of sages but demonic Grahas.

The elephant figure in the middle of the scene, unmistakably stands for Indra, who according to the legend, firstly showed hostile attitude towards Skanda but soon compromised with him.

The short fragmentary inscription in Brāhmī characters of the 1st-2nd century A. D., incised on one of its sides reads *Kumāra V[a] ra*. This furnishes a definite clue to the presumed identification. How significant was this phrase Kumāravara, standing for Skanda, in the contemporary age, is shown by its occurrence in the epic at several places<sup>3</sup>.

### Stone Images :

The testimony of several literary sources, the *Skandayāga*, *Mahābhāṣya* and Jaina texts, may be earlier, but perhaps the earliest dated Skanda image, as far as we know, comes from Mathurā made in the Kuṣāṇa period. This is of speckled red sandstone and was found from a well not far from the famous ancient Kankali Tila site. It shows the god standing in *sthānaka* pose. The most characteristic feature of Skanda icons, the lance, which it holds in the right hand, rests above the left shoulder against a well decorated cushion. The right hand betrays the *abhaya* attitude in a very graceful manner bestowing amnesty on his devotees. The god is clad in a *dhotī* tied with a scarf round the waist, and wears an exceptionally rich headgear, earrings, a tarque, a flat triangular necklace, armlets, several bracelets—all in typical Kuṣāṇa style. The image is excellently preserved but for the tip of nose and fingers, which are slightly damaged. The god is represented as an adolescent youth and on his face there plays an unearthly smile. (*Pl. VII*).

It stands on a pedestal which contains an informative epigraph running in three lines. It informs that, 'in the eleventh year, fourth month of winter, on the

<sup>1</sup> Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 106-7.

<sup>2</sup> Roy, *Mbh. Trans.*, Vol. III, pp. 484, 487.

<sup>3</sup> *Supra*, p. 28.



## IV. EARLY ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA ON SKANDA CULT

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last day, was installed the image of Kārttikaya by the brothers Viśvadeva, Viśvasoma, Viśvabhava and Viśvāvasu, the sons of Viśvila, the Kṣatriyas, in their own house...<sup>1</sup> The date of the inscription being in the Śaka era corresponds to A.D. 89, and thus falls in the reign of Kaniṣka the great.

In the *Catalogue of the Brāhmanical Images in Mathurā Art*, we have two more Kārttikeya statues described as follows:—

1022.—Standing figure of Kārttikeya (ht. 6") with right hand in *abhayamudrā*, and left hand holding a big spear. He wears his hair in a top-knot and a small beard. Kuṣāṇa period. From Mansawala Well at Palikhera.

1579.—Round statuette (ht. 4½") showing headless Kārttikeya riding on peacock facing front. The deity is two-armed, having the right hand in *abhayamudrā* and holding a spear or Śakti in left. The figure wears a torque, armlets and a scarf. Two loose locks are falling on shoulders. Traces of a sacred thread visible. Kuṣāṇa period. From Madhuban.

Iconographically these sculptures show almost identical features, left hand grasping a spear and the right held in *abhayamudrā*. Obviously, this was the simplest formula of early Skanda image in the Kuṣāṇa period and his special distinguishing attribute was Śakti. Yet another stage is exhibited by certain other Kuṣāṇa images which are datable in the 2nd-3rd century A.D. (*Fig. 15, Pl. XII a*). In these the god is shown standing and in his two hands are held a spear and a cock.

A more or less similar image was discovered at Taxila. It is a stone sculpture (almost carved in round) of Skanda with spear and cock, datable in later periods of Gandhāra art<sup>2</sup>.

As evidenced from a number of images in the Gandhāra region the worship of Pañcika and Hārītī was very popular there in the Kuṣāṇa and later periods. Pañcika also named Jambhala, is sometimes identified with Kubera-Vaiśravaṇa and Hārītī with Bhadrā<sup>3</sup>. They are represented in sculptures as holding a lance,

<sup>1</sup> (१) सं ११ हे ४ दि १ एतस्यां पूर्व्यायां कार्तिकेयस्य प्रतिमा  
(२) प्रतिष्ठापिता विश्वदेवेन विश्वसोमेन विश्वभयेन विश्ववसुना  
(३) च भ्रातृभिर्विश्वपुत्रेहि क्षत्रियेहि स्वके आवसथे पोस्थिका ।

*JUPHS.*, Vol. XVI, Pt. 1, pp. 65-6.

<sup>2</sup> Kar, R. C., "An Early Image of Kārttikeya from Taxila", *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XXX, No. 1, 1954, pp. 81-5.

<sup>3</sup> Agrawala, *Mathurā Museum Catalogue* (Brāhmanical), pp. 80-91.



a purse, a cup and with children round them. (Pls. XIII-XVII). However, they represent the divine powers those of riches and fertility<sup>1</sup>. Otherwise Pañcika is a war-god with his attribute a long spear<sup>2</sup>. From the iconographic viewpoint, when carrying only a spear, he is quite similar to Śaktidhara Skanda. The identity of Hārītī with Jātahārīṇī is well indicated from their like nature as the child-birth deity and the similar etymology of their names. (Hārītī = who takes away; Jātahārīṇī = who takes away a child). From the *Kāśyapa Saṁhitā*, as we have shown in Chapter V, it is clear that Jātahārīṇī was the general appellation of numerous fertility goddesses whose worship was in vogue all over the country. She was known by various names in different areas and sections of society, and is explained in the text to be Śaṣṭhī herself. It seems that while as 'Sixth', in a scheme of Skanda *parivāra*, Devasenā his spouse was named Śaṣṭhī as 'Fifth' Skanda himself was known Pañcika<sup>3</sup>. The understood association of Guhyaka Kubera with Guha Skanda is already mentioned above.

The earliest representations of the Seven Divine Mothers, however, show no iconographic distinctions. (Pl. Xa-b). They are portrayed, as in a Mathurā relief of the early Kuṣāṇa period as simple female figures without any distinguishing symbol or vehicle<sup>4</sup>. Kaumārī, the female energy of Kumāra-Kārttikeya is distinguished by a *śakti* and other attributes of her husband when in later period various cognisances of them are shown in a scheme of seven mother-goddesses as female energies of the seven great gods.

It is important here to note that in several of the reliefs at Mathurā of the Kuṣāṇa period, we see by the side of the mother figures a male figure holding spear in his one hand and *abhaya mudrā* in the other. (Pl. X). It has been pointed out by Dr. Agrawala in his *Mathurā Catalogue* that "the convention of carving the Divine Mothers between Virabhadra and Gaṇeśa preceded in the Kuṣāṇa period by the figures of two *āyudhapuruṣas* holding spears"<sup>5</sup>. However, these *āyudhapuruṣas* figures are similar to the standing Kārttikeya statues of the Kuṣāṇa period. In the light of inscriptional evidence one of the two spear-holding figures carved flanking the mother group on either side may be identified with Skanda who is

<sup>1</sup> Goetz, "Iranian or Buddhist Deity", *Boroda State Museum Bulletin*, Vol. III, Pt. II, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18; Ingholt, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

<sup>3</sup> The names Pañcika and Hārītī for sculptural representations are really only tentative. For this see Goetz, *op. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> Agrawala, *loc. cit.*, p. 59-61. Nos. F 38, F 39, 126, 1179 and 2490.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 60



invoked together with the divine mothers in the epigraphs of the Ikṣvākus, Kadam-  
bas and Cālukyas<sup>1</sup>. In such a *mātrkā* panel, it seems, his figure was duplicated

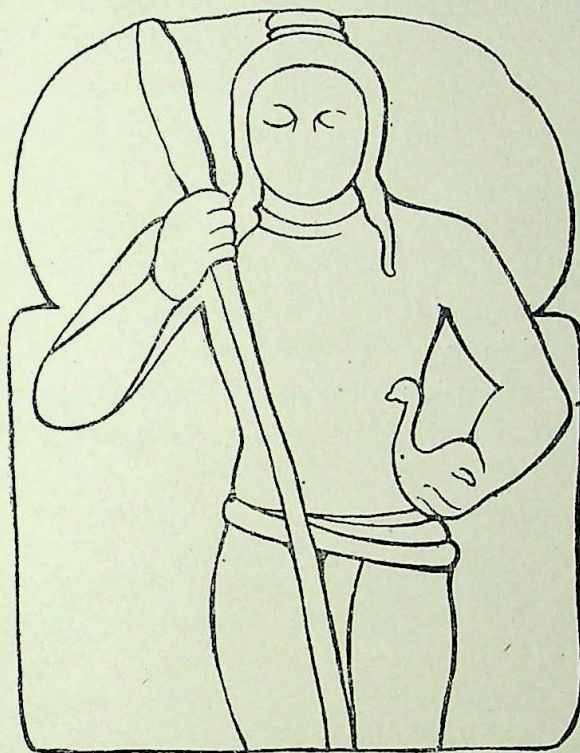


Fig. 15

15. Skanda holding Spear and Cock. From Mathurā. Late Kuṣāṇa, c. 300 A.D.

perhaps owing to his importance and with a view to fill the space on the other side. Later on one of them was replaced by a figure of Gaṇapaṭi.

To these may be added the new stone-figures of Kārttikeya found during the excavations of the Ikṣvāku sites in the western part of the Vijayapurī valley (Nagarjunikonda, Guntur Dist.) carried out in the year 1956-57. In the excavations, a temple was exposed which on the basis of the inscribed pillar-records, reading the name Caṇḍa-Śakti-Kumāra, was dedicated to Skanda. In another pillared-complex surrounded by an enclosure wall, a head of Skanda image and also a standing figure of Skanda in the *samabhaṅga* pose, were found. The latter image (1 ft 10 in. high) is important and shows the left hand of the god akimbo holding a *kukkuta*. As it is pointed out in the *Report*, the repeated occurrence of Kārttikeya images and shrines on the river-side and also in a regular temple-complex would

<sup>1</sup> See below.



tend to show the importance of Kārttikeya worship for the Ikṣvākus<sup>1</sup>. The fact that the Ikṣvāku kings were devout followers of Skanda is further strengthened from their own names and those of their relations, like Khandasiri, Khamḍasā-garamṇaka, Khandaviśākhamaṇaka, where *Khanda* stands for Skanda<sup>2</sup>. Cāṁ-tamūla I, the Ikṣvāku king, is mentioned in the inscription as devoted to the god Virūpākṣapati Mahāśena, which is evidently a Skanda name<sup>3</sup>.

The several names of the early Pallava kings were also based on Skanda, like Skandavarman, Śivaskandavarman etc. According to the later Tālaguṇḍa inscriptions Mayūra Śarmā, the first ruler of the Kadamba dynasty was 'greatly favoured and anointed general (Sanāpati) by Śaḍānana and the mothers'. This motif is found repeated in many Kadamba records<sup>4</sup>. This evidences fully the devoted patronage given by these kings to Skanda worship and which was continued in the Deccan and South by the succeeding dynasties, viz., Cālukyas, Pallavas and others.

### Cult Images :

Several notable figures of a goat-faced deity are also found in the early Kuṣāṇa art of Mathurā. They represented the god Naigameśa, whose goat-head is invariably mentioned in literature, is fully ascertained by the short Brāhmi epigraph on a *torāṇa* relief reading *Bhagavā Nemeso*, 'the worshipful Nemeśa'. The most remarkable is this latter inscribed *torāṇa* relief found during the excavations at the Jaina Kankali Tila mound<sup>5</sup>. It shows a goat-faced divinity seated on a *caukī*; on his left are three female figures, and a nude male child. (Pl. XI). It was rightly pointed out by Dr. Bühler, in view of the Jaina nature of the site, that this panel illustrated the deity Hariṇegameśi of the *Kalpasūtra*, Naigameśa of the *Nemināthacarita*, and Naigameya of other works. According to the *Kalpasūtra* legend, the foetus of Mahāvīra was transferred from Brāhmaṇ Devanandā to Kṣatriyā Triśalā by Hariṇegameśi and it was suggested by Bühler that the panel might have depicted the same legend. The story quoted by Bühler

<sup>1</sup> *Indian Archaeology, A Review*, 1956-57, p. 36-7.

<sup>2</sup> Sircar, D. C., *Successors of the Sātavāhanas*, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 239.

<sup>5</sup> A. S. R., Vol. XX, pl. IV, 5; JRAS, 1895, pp. 153ff. Smith, *Jaina Stūpa of Mathurā*, pl. XVIII, p. 5; Bühler, *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. II, p. 314-6; Agrawala, "The Presiding Deity of Child-birth," *Jaina Antiquary*, Vol. II, No. 4, pp. 75-9; "A note on the god Naigameśa" JUPHS, Vol. XX, pp. 68-73.



from the *Nemināthacarita* (VIII canto) shows how Kṛṣṇa invoked the help of the goat-faced deity Naigameśa to obtain a son for Satyabhāmā. There is hardly any doubt that the Jaina tradition knew the same god of 'child-birth and children', who held a prominent position in the pantheon of the nine Skanda *grahas* of the *Mahābhārata* and *Suśruta Saṁhitā*.<sup>1</sup> The goat-face of the god furnished a simple but definite formula for his iconography.

Other early images deposited in the Mathurā Museum also show the male goat-faced deity (Nos. 909, 1001, 1046, 1115, 2482 and 2547). They are on stylistic ground datable to the Kuṣāṇa period<sup>2</sup>. In most of them the god is shown with several children borne on his shoulder. But there are certain other similar statuettes which represent a female goddess with a goat's face; and most probably is his female counterpart to be designated as Naigameśī, of the god Naigameśa (*Pl. XII b—d*). In sculptures Nos. E2 and E3 she is portrayed with prominent breasts, carrying a child on a round pillow with her left hand. Other beautiful specimens of this deity are 799, 1210 and 1092. In the last statuette she is a four-armed goddess seated in *lalitāsana* on a mountain with a child on her left knee who is holding a cup near his mouth. Her attributes are a trident, cup and noose and below her right leg is carved a miniature animal, a bull or a buffalo as her vehicle.

To this group certain other similar depictions of a goddess flanked with children can be added but they have human head showing an evolution in the iconography as observed by Dr. Agrawala. "A third stage seems to have been reached in the evolution of the 'Mother-Goddess' of Jaina iconography when the goat face was replaced by a fair damsel's face. The Jaina conception of Mother-and-child came to be ideally perfected."

Here we may trace several strands which represent the evolution of the nomenclature and iconography of Naigameśa as the presiding deity of child-birth. We know from the *Mahābhārata*, the *Purāṇas* and the Āyurvedic lists of Graha Devatās that Naigameya was one of the names of Skanda. Its earliest form as Nejameśa (with a cerebral ś) is found in the *Rgvedic Khila* or apocryphal mantras which were certainly taken from folk-lore and did not form part of the official *Rgvedic* hymn. This is also indicated by the hymn forming part of the *Gr̥hyasūtra* ritual as given by the *Āśvalāyana Gr̥hyasūtra* and others. The

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, pp. 33-4.

<sup>2</sup> Agrawala, *Mathurā Museum Catalogue*, Pt. III, p. 33-5.



meaning of the word Nejameśa had reference to the name of a Graha or a demon inimical to children but when propitiated with a *sthālīpāka* etc. the same was considered to become benevolent. The etymology of the word is uncertain. But most probably it consisted of two elements, viz., *neja* from the root *nij* to wash and *meśa*, a ram. It, in fact, denoted a ram on which the child was seated and bathed, and thus purified of the evil eye of the Graha. That this etymology held good seems to be indicated by the ceremony still current at the time of the Karpavhaed sacrament of a child.

The second stage is observed in the form of the word as Naigameśa or Naigameya, which was a very popular name of the deity and literally means the one who is the god of the merchant class (*Naigama* + *Īśa*). This form of the name is met with specially in the Āyurvedic texts. The third stage was reached when the legend of the god Naigameśa transferring the foetus of Brāhmaṇī-Devanandā to Kṣatriyā Triśalā was formulated amongst the Jainas who *par excellence* formed the Naigama class, and amongst whom the *Naigama Nyāya* was current. They were the worshipper of the god Naigameśa as shown by the inscribed Mathurā sculpture of the deity from Kankali Tila.

The next stage is shown by the name Hariṇaigameśī, in which the word 'Hari' signifies Indra, and the full name stands for the deity who was reckoned as one of the many chief officers of Indra to carry out his behests. The transference of the embryo was actually carried out by the order of Indra. This form of the name lead to a little iconographic confusion in which the first three letters reading *Hariṇa* suggested that the head of the deity was of an antelope with long antelers, as shown in the above Mathurā inscribed relief. In iconography, the god came to be represented in association with a single child or a group of children carried on his shoulder and playing about his feet. He was first depicted as a male figure showing the deity Naigameśa. At the same time, it became necessary to depict his female counterpart with a goat's or ram's head and in similar association with children. In the third stage this deity of child-birth was represented as a female with human head but with a child or group of children in similar position. Thus the available archaeological evidence gives a fair idea of the evolution of the name and the form of the deity Naigameśa, which was one of the synonyms of Skanda and a member of the team of his *Grahas*.



## CHAPTER V

## SKANDA IN THE PURĀṆAS AND CLASSICAL LITERATURE

The position of Skanda in Hindu pantheon reached its climax in the classical period of Indian culture and literature which came into existence during the reigns of the Gupta monarchs. With the beginning of this epoch we enter into the most glorious phase of Skanda study. As we have seen, by the period of the Kuṣāṇas Skanda had already achieved an exalted position in the religious hierarchy and influences of his cult were spreading in different quarters. His Śaiva affinities as well as the persistent efforts of his devout followers like the Yaudheyas had made him the warrior-god. He was now accepted as the son of Śiva, one of the two great gods. The epic testimony of an overall recognition given to him from every quarter and the universal homage and numerous attributes bestowed on him well anticipates the future of this deity<sup>2</sup> as the national War-God. From the rank of a folk deity, now he was raised to the status of a national war-god and attained a supreme position almost similar to that enjoyed by Viṣṇu and Śiva, as seen in the *Kumārasambhava* of Kālidāsa and the Purāṇic legends. Various aspects of the deity and his cult which had their origin earlier are seen in this period further elaborated and emphasised. For this period the evidence from the Purāṇas and Kāvya on the one hand and art and archaeology on the other is of vast dimensions in which several strands were mingled in the exaltation of this god. As we could gather also from the early history of Skanda, it is obvious that he, as the son of Śiva, enjoyed only an ancillary position in the Śiva family. But that also helped, no doubt, in so many ways in elevating his position and glory.

*The Legend of his birth*

Details of the birth-legend of Skanda-Kārttikeya were developed considerably in Purāṇic mythology; and that was done, on the one hand, by applying the ingenious methods of Purāṇic elaboration, and a restatement in the light of philosophical and yogic disciplines explaining esoterically the so many cult features, on the other. So far as the legendary myths and motifs are concerned Purāṇic writers have faithfully represented the earlier versions of the Birth-story of Kumāra-Skanda though enhanced with some new motifs, e.g., the demon Tāraka



and the peacock as his vehicle. But under the influence of various religions and expository approaches, we have in several of the Purāṇic accounts, no doubt, dissimilar forms of the story. The legend of Kārttikeya is found recited at length in a major number of the Purāṇas. For example, *Līṅga Purāṇa* (1.104.105), *Vāyu Purāṇa* (ch. 72.24 ff), *Matsya Purāṇa* (5.26 ff; chs. 146-160), *Śiva Purāṇa* (chs. 9.19), *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* (II. 65; III 11), *Vāmana Purāṇa* (chs. 57, 58), *Śiva Mahāpurāṇa* (2 (4), 1-12), *Padma Purāṇa* (6.38), *Skanda Purāṇa* (1(1), 20-30; 1(2), 20-32). Kālidāsa glorified it in the *Kumārasambhava* "The Birth of Kumāra", which represents the common and standardised version of the story.

The birth of Skanda and his exploits formed part of the mythical motif of the *Devāsura* conflict going on ceaselessly. In this scheme of the perennial clash between the two opposite principles of good and evil, the demons are portrayed acquiring invincible power and irresistible violence 'by accumulating psychic energy through a severe regimen of ascetic exercises' and then manacng their opponents the Devas. This happens from time to time and the same myth of the rise of the devil and of his being vanquished by the god is repeated again and again, certainly in a new version, forged afresh in a different mould. The motif of the demon Tāraka evolved in the Purāṇas in relation to Skanda and his exploits, as it appears, was an invention of the Gupta period, for we have no piece of evidence from the vast epic literature, art and inscriptions of the pre-Gupta times which refers to Tārakāsura and his harassing the gods. No doubt as pointed out earlier, in the great epic Skanda had as his rival demon the demon Mahiṣāsura<sup>1</sup>, but perhaps only due to his association with Śiva and the Goddess. But it did not serve the purpose for the killing of the demon Mahiṣa was attributed fully to the Great Goddess as her exploit. Therefore, for Skanda, it appears, a separate demon became necessary that was formulated as the hostile Tārakāsura against whom he justified his divine strength.

The short account compiled in the *Vāyu Purāṇa*<sup>2</sup> about the birth of Skanda is similar to that of the epic, both in contents and details, and also appears to be nearer in time to that of the epic<sup>3</sup>. But the myth of Tāraka is present in the *Vāyu* which is not to be found in the *Mahābhārata*. It is clear from the *Purāṇa* that it was a later development and was yet in a formative stage since it has here

<sup>1</sup> *Supra* p.

<sup>2</sup> *Vāyu P.*, Ch. 72.

<sup>3</sup> Hazra, *Studies in the Purāṇic Records and Customs*, pp. 13-17.



only a nominal reference.<sup>1</sup> The Krauñca mount, the first victim of Skanda's valour in the epic, is narrated here as his play-hill, where he killed the demon Tāraka. It was on this hillock that the lions were yoked to Skanda's chariot and he was consecrated to the generalship of the gods.<sup>2</sup>

According to the *Matsya Purāṇa*, chs. 146-60, Skanda is a member of Śiva's family and the legend of his birth is closely associated with Śiva and his consort Pārvatī as he is invariably considered their son, though all the legendary details of his birth and rearing are there of which roots are far-reaching in earlier tradition as analysed above in the epic account. The story is to be found first related synthetically in seven *Ślokas* and then at great length in 1569 verses<sup>3</sup>. In the colophon of chapters 154-158, the story is given the title *Kumārasambhava*<sup>4</sup> which is known best from the epic poem of the same name by Kālidāsa, though the whole "Kāvya" in the *Purāṇa* is styled as *Skanda-carita*<sup>5</sup>. The whole saga of the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī has been brought into the picture of the birth of Skanda and sung both in the *Purāṇas* and by Kālidāsa in a sublime style.

The principal motif of the story according to the *Matsya Purāṇa* itself is as follows :—

The Devas being worsted by the demon Tāraka, son of Vajrāṅga Daitya, repaired to Brahmā who assured them and said, "Give up your fear. The son of Śiva born from the Daughter of the Mountain Himālaya will slay the demon." Then after the lapse of some time Śiva became infatuated with the beauty of Pārvatī and he allowed his semen to fall in the mouth of Agni, who became the second mother in the birth of Kumāra. The seed of Śiva thus ejaculated in the mouth of Agni pleased the Devas abiding in the body of Agni. But they could not digest it and so the seed ripped open their bellies and fell in the river Gaṅgā and then in a grove of the *Śara* weeds. From there he was born as Guha, appearing resplendent like Sūrya. When the Boy was only seven days old he killed the Asura Tāraka.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Compare with *Vāmana Purāṇa* Ch. 58. See also, Agrawala, *Vāmana Purāṇa—a study*, p. 117.

<sup>2</sup> Patil, *Cultural History from the Vāyu Purāṇa*, p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> Agrawala, *Matsya Purāṇa—a study*, p. 237.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Matsya Purāṇa* 160. 32.

<sup>6</sup> Agrawala, *op.cit.*, p. 237.



In the elaborate version of the story the agency of the six Kṛttikās is also recognised who drank the fecund water ejected by the gods and again offered that to Pārvatī who conceived and gave birth to the Babe from her right side.

Skanda was born as a boy with six heads and he held a Śakti. He was named *Kumāra*, for he was destined to kill (*māra*) the evil Asura (*ku*). As the son of the six Pleiades he was named *Kārttikeya* and since the Kṛttikās were united in a single branch (*Sākhā*) he got another name *Viśākha*. On the day of Śaṣṭhī when only six days old, he was anointed as Lord Guha by all the gods headed by Brahmā, Indra and Viṣṇu. Indra gave him his daughter Devasenā in marriage. Tvaṣṭā presented him a toy as Kukkuta. Thus appointed in the office of generalissimo of the divine army he was praised by all the gods with a *stotra*. And, on the seventh day in a long and trying battle the Asura was slain by Guha Mahāsena.

As in the epic, so in the Purāṇas, with usual inconsistencies of detail, Skanda is described as the son of Umā or Pārvatī, though he was not born from the womb of her. At the same time he is the offspring of the Kṛttikās, who either bore him as their child and delivered him separately into six forms, or came later on the scene breastfed the uncared babe who by his intrinsic power divided himself into six forms and suck them as his mothers satisfying each one of them at the same time. His mother is Gaṅgā into which the dissipated *retas* of Rudra was thrown by Agni, and it was only due to Umā's curse that she had to bear Agni's *garbha*<sup>1</sup>.

Now, Śiva-Rudra is his recognised father with whose cult his worship got mingled. Besides, the early motif of his being the son of Agni is not altogether forgotten<sup>2</sup>. In several passages he is a son of Agni through Svāhā<sup>3</sup>. He is son of Paśupati and Svāhā, but clearly it is said by the learned that the god Paśupati has Fire as his self (*vahnnyātmā*)<sup>4</sup>. According to the *Vāmana Purāṇa*<sup>5</sup>, it was originally the semen of Rudra-Śiva which Agni had to take within himself and roamed about for five thousand years suffering with its intense heat. And, this happened by way of a curse which Agni had got in punishment from Pārvatī for his act of peering while she was with her husband<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Matsya Purāṇa* 135.79.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Vāyu* 27.53 ; *Matsya* 135.79 ; *Bhāg.* VI. 6.14.

<sup>4</sup> *Liṅga Purāṇa* II. 13. 7-8.

<sup>5</sup> *Vāmana*, Ch. 57 ; Agrawala, *Vāmana Purāṇa — a study*, p. 108.

<sup>6</sup> *Brahma P.* II. 10-27.



The *Matsya Purāṇa* in a humorous tone says that the energy of Śiva received by fire really entered the belly of all the gods because Agni is the mouth of the gods, and from there being undigested exploded out in the form of a pool of water.

The "Story of Agni" is described in several of the early Purāṇas<sup>1</sup>, perhaps following the lines of the *Mahābhārata* Chapter entitled "Agnivamśa," but it does not include the legend of the birth of Agni's son Skanda as we have seen in the great epic<sup>2</sup>. No doubt, in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*,<sup>3</sup> he is described as son of Agni being born in the reed forest (*śaravaṇa*). However, the birth of Skanda is felicitated by the gods with joyous hearts for he is born for their welfare and as their saviour from the demon harassment. It was heralded by the divine musicians, the Siddhas, Cāraṇas, Yakṣas, Kinnaras and others. All the gods praised him with a prayer of invocation and he was appointed the Commander-in-chief of the divine forces by Indra, Brahmā and Viṣṇu, or by Brahmā and Rudra, or allegorically Indra married to him his daughter Devasenā. Viṣṇu presented to him a fowl and a peacock, Sarasvatī, the lute, Brahmā, a goat and Śiva, a ram.

However, the origin of Kumāra has been described in a mystic language at several places in the Purāṇas. It is stated in the *Matsya Purāṇa*<sup>4</sup> that from the union of Śiva and Pārvatī Skanda was born like fire from the two churning sticks (*araṇī*). As observed by one scholar, "An allegorical interpretation of the birth of Kārttikeya is given in another Purāṇa. Viṣṇu who is identified with Śiva is Puruṣa. Umā who is no other than Śrī is Avyakta or Pārvatī. From their union was produced Ahaṁkāra, and this was Kārttikeya, ...The Purāṇas also mention that Brahmā and Viṣṇu were born respectively as Heramba and Ṣaḍānana (*Varāha P.* 25. 1-43), thereby suggesting the identity of Kārttikeya with Viṣṇu." In fact, he is reckoned as an Avatāra of Hari or Viṣṇu<sup>6</sup> in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.

<sup>1</sup> *Brahmāṇḍa* II. Ch. 12; *Matsya* Ch. 51.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> *Viṣṇu* I. 15. 115-6.

<sup>4</sup> 154. 52-3.

<sup>5</sup> Kurukkal, K. K., "A Study of the Kārttikeya cult as reflected in the Epics and the Purāṇas", *University of Ceylon Review*, October 1961, p. 132.

<sup>6</sup> *Bhāga*. XI. 417.



*Kumāro navamaḥ sargaḥ :*

In the *Sarga-Pratisarga* Scheme of the Purāṇas, Kumāra is described as the Ninth (*Navama*) Sarga (Creation)<sup>1</sup> which is both natural (*prākṛta*) and created (*vaikṛta*). This doctrine, as connected quite often in the Purāṇas with the crying of the hungry Kumāra Nilalohita or Rudra for a name,<sup>2</sup> appears to be a purposive development, retaining the ancient terminology, of the "Kumāra-vidyā" which is original to the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*<sup>3</sup>, as already discussed<sup>4</sup>.

Though at several places references to Kārttikeya are made, but the legend of this god has hardly been given importance in earlier Purāṇas like the *Viṣṇu*, *Līṅga* and *Mārkaṇḍeya*<sup>5</sup>. Perhaps the earliest Purāṇic version of the story is to be found in the *Viṣṇu-dharmottara Purāṇa*<sup>6</sup>, which is almost the same as preserved in the epic. It nowhere does refer to the *Tāraka-vadha*, a motif which is a later evolution, dating not earlier than 300 A.D., and which is sung in such a sublime way by Kālidāsa (about 400 A.D.). Similar to the epic in this Purāṇa, the god is accredited with the disrupting of the Krauñca hill. Still are caused horrors in the heart of Mahiṣa-demon by the birth of Skanda<sup>7</sup> who was, as has been pointed out earlier, the arch-enemy demon of Śiva family<sup>8</sup>.

We find in the *Līṅga Purāṇa* a description of Kārttikeya's dance and childish sports and activities as a source for the filial joy of the divine couple. As a sporting boy, resplendent like the sun, the six-headed son is described by the goddess Pārvatī as shining with various ornaments. Mahādeva himself asks Skanda to show them his dance and then they become pleased with the boyish pranks (*līlās*) of their son<sup>9</sup>. Kālidāsa has also given a narration of some typical childish plays of Skanda enjoyed by the divine parents.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Vāyu P.* 6.65; *Viṣṇu P.* I. 5.25; *Garuḍa P.* I. 4.18. For other references see Kirfel, *Das Purāṇa Pañcalakṣaṇa*, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Līṅga P.* II. 18.18 (also I. 14); *Vāyu P.* 27.1-53; *Viṣṇu P.* I. 8.1-12; *Brahmāṇḍa P.* II. Ch. 10.

<sup>3</sup> ŚB. 6.2.1.1-20.

<sup>4</sup> *Supra*, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> As are dated by Hazra, *Viṣṇu P.* between A.D. 100 and 350, *Līṅga P.* in its present recast 600 A.D., but was an early Purāṇa, *Mārkaṇḍeya P.*, major portion about 200 A.D. See his *Purāṇic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs*, pp. 19-26, 93-6, 8-13.

<sup>6</sup> VD. P. I. Chs. 228-30.

<sup>7</sup> VD. P. I. 95. 26.

<sup>8</sup> *Supra*, p. 31.

<sup>9</sup> *Līṅga P.* I. 170. 120-133.

<sup>10</sup> Eleventh Ch.



Here we may point out that this aspect of the boy god got much elaboration in the Tamil land where worshippers of Subramanya have a living faith in this aspect and are fond of his *bāla līlās* even to-day.

*In early Tamilian Kāvya :*

The worship of Skanda as Murugan (Youth) in South India is traced back by some scholars to very olden times<sup>1</sup>. However, in the present state of our knowledge, it can not be taken much earlier than the beginning of the Christian era. *Seyon* (red-complexioned), perhaps the oldest name of the god Murugan, is sung in the old Tamil hymns as the deity of the hilly region. His spouse Valli herself is a hill girl from the hill tribe of the Kuravas. He bears *vel* or spear and so is named *Velan*. His worship, it is believed, consisted of simple folk offering of flowers etc. and votaries danced and sang to propitiate him.<sup>2</sup>

One specimen of the beautiful songs sung by the hill women in honour of Murugan is preserved in the old Sangam epic, *Silappadikāram* (c. 200 A.D.)<sup>3</sup>. He is lord of the hills and is prayed to the accompaniment of singing and dancing by girls so that they might be married.

"This is indeed the spear wielded by the deity who never deserts the highly renowned Cendil, Cengoḍu, the white hill and Erakam—the white, shining, leaf-shaped spear, which put an end to (the Asura) Śūra (in the form of a) mango-tree, in olden days, by chasing him into the sea surrounding the earth.

"O ! This is indeed the spear held aloft by the matchless deity with six faces and twelve arms ; this is the shining spear wherewith (the God) riding the peacock (or elephant) and celebrated by the kings of the celestials, vanquished the Asura enemies and destroyed their greatness.

<sup>1</sup> Venkataraman, K. R., "Skanda Cult in South India", *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. IV, p. 309 ; Sastri, K. A. N., *Development of Religion in South India*, p. 21. "The undoubted antiquity of his cult among the Tamils is attested by the discovery at the pre-historic urn-fields at Ādiccanallur of bronze cocks, iron spears and mouthpieces of gold leaf similar to those employed by modern worshippers of Murugan when they are on a pilgrimage carrying the *Kāvaḍi* in fulfilment of a vow." Sastri, p. 21-2.

<sup>2</sup> Venkataraman, *op. cit.*, p. 309.

<sup>3</sup> See Dikshitar, English translation of the *Silappadikāram*, his Introduction, p. 10. Dr. K. A. N. Sastri, however, accords to it a date about the fifth cent. A.D.



"O! This is indeed the spear decorating the lovely hands of him who was suckled by six mothers in the lotus-bed of the Śaravanai pool; this is the long spear that destroyed the Krauñca mountain, after cleaving the breast of the Asura who had that hill for his residence."<sup>1</sup>

The god is described riding on a peacock with his consort Valli, the beautiful daughter of the mountain folk who has a crescent-like forehead of the peacock's hue<sup>2</sup>. He is the son of the god of the Kailāsa Hill and Pārvatī<sup>3</sup>. His long lance is red like fire<sup>4</sup>, or fiery in itself<sup>5</sup>; he himself is of red complexion<sup>6</sup>. The temple dedicated to him is distinguished by the cock-flag on its top<sup>7</sup>. In the epic are attributed to him the dances *tuḍikkūttu* and *kuḍaikūttu*, the drum-dance and the umbrella-dance respectively. He danced "the *tuḍi* dance in the midst of the sea, which itself served as the dancing hall, following the destruction of the demon Śūra who hid himself there," and "the *kuḍai* lowering the umbrella before the Asuras who gave up their arms in great distress."<sup>8</sup>

The *Tolkāppiyam* portrays him as the tutelary deity of the hill men (*kurunjinilam*).<sup>9</sup> In praise of his glory are sung the late Sangam works like the *Tirumurugārruppaḍai* and one-fourth of the *Paripāḍal*<sup>10</sup>. "Nakkīnar, the poet who sang the *Tirumurugārruppaḍai* tells us how Kurava girls on the hill side planted a cock banner smeared with ghee and mustard oil, offered to the god garlands of red oleander and green leaves, burnt incense, made oblations of balls of cooked rice mixed with goat's blood and danced to the tune of sweet melodies. Elsewhere, the poet tells that Brāhmaṇas, who strictly followed the six duties and the codes of *dharma* and tended the sacred fires, worshipped Skanda with flowers chanting holy *mantras*."<sup>11</sup>

It appears, Murugan was a popular hill god, perhaps supreme among the deities of the Kurava and Veḍḍa people of the non-Aryan section of the

<sup>1</sup> Dikshitar, *op. cit.*, pp. 277-8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 280.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 94.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 270.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* p. 117.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. 199.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 124-5.

<sup>9</sup> Ahanānuru, *sūtra* 5.

<sup>10</sup> Dikshitar, *op. cit.*, p. 89, fn. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Venkataraman, *op. cit.*, p. 309.



Tamil land<sup>1</sup>. His cult became identified with that of Skanda of similar nature and associations. It is not far from the truth that this blending was, if not complete, partly understood by the time of the author of the *Silappadikāram*, i.e., c. 2nd century A.D. The certain features inherited from the cult of the hill-tract deity were new to the already prevailing worship of Skanda in the Pallava and Ikṣvāku areas. Some important new features may be pointed out as follows: (1) Kumāra or bachelor god whose marriage was allegorically conceived with Devasenā had as Murugan the beautiful wife Vallī, a hill girl herself; (2) his flag or banner got, no doubt, the figure of a cock, and as we know, the god in iconography of the early period is shown both in the north and in Āndhra holding a fowl in his hand. But he got as his vehicle a peacock and also the "gem-like" peacock flag.

In old Tamil works of the Sangam age he is portrayed with the peacock (or elephant) as his mount. As we have seen, the association of peacock with the god is traceable as early as the *Silappadikāram*<sup>2</sup>.

The goddess Kottavī, the Tamil Mother Goddess, is described in the *Paṭṭupaddu*<sup>3</sup> as dancing in the battle-field with her son Murugan; she is given such other names in the *Silappadikāram* as Kumārī, Gaurī etc.,<sup>4</sup> and is portrayed as "the maid of the aborigines" to whom oblations of balls, dolls, peacocks and wild fowls were considered sacred.<sup>5</sup>

The mountain region is dear to the red-complexioned Murugan which is known as Kuruñji. The commentator of the *Tolkāppiyam* Naccinar-kiniyar refers to the worship of Murugan. He observes that "in the Kuruñji region the Kuravas (or the dwellers of the forest region) and others are found to offer several oblations in the sacrifice to the Red god"<sup>6</sup> He rides now on an elephant, now a goat, or again on a peacock<sup>7</sup>. His banner has a wild fowl for its device.<sup>8</sup>

A vivid description of the orgies in honour of the god Murugan is found in the *Paṭṭupaddu*.<sup>9</sup> "A shed is put up and is adorned with garlands and flowers.

<sup>1</sup> Venkataraman, *op. cit.*, p. 310.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> Karamarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

<sup>4</sup> Dikshitar, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

<sup>5</sup> Jnana Prakasar, *Siddhānta Śaivism*, p. 99-100. Also Karamarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

<sup>6</sup> *Ahan.* 22. Karamararakar, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

<sup>7</sup> *Paṭṭupaddu*, IV. 75.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* VI. 38.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* I. 220-249.



High above it is hoisted Murugan's flag bearing the wild fowl's device, to scare away, as the commentator suggests, blood-thirsty goblins from the feast. His priest who bears his favourite weapon *Vel* or javelin and who is therefore known as *Velan* (the name of god also) has a red thread round his wrist probably as a sign of consecration to the deity. He worships at the altar and uttering spells and incantations scatters flowers, and fried paddy on all sides. He then slaughters a fat bull, and in its warm blood mixes boiled rice and offers it to the god amidst blare of horns, bells and drums, while the perfumes of incense and flowers fill the place. Today, of course, it forms an integral part of the service whose characteristic name is *veri-addu*, drunken revelry. The *Velan* as well as the women present begin to dance to the frantic songs of the assistance. And some one in the company—it is usually the *Velan*—becomes possessed by the deity and jumps and snorts giving out at the same time oracles as regards the fortunes of the by-stander. These sacrifices to Murugan seem to have been very prevalent in the South of India in ancient times ; so much so that all sacrifices have come to be known by the name *Murugu*. (*Paṭṭupaddu*, VI. 38). The modern devil dance of the villager is but a repetition of the *veri-addu* of the ancient days".<sup>1</sup>

One more feature of the Purāṇic Skandism should be emphasised here. As we have often noted in previous chapters cock is the vehicle as well as the ensign of the god. In sculptures of the Kuṣāṇa period Skanda is portrayed with his favourite bird invariably a cock, and the same is to be found on coins connected with the deity. This fact, corroborated both from literature and art is no doubt of utmost value. It helps not only together with the other myth of Tāraka in dating the epic '*Skandopākhyāna*' to the early Kuṣāṇa period but points to one more thing that the myth of peacock in place of cock was a Purāṇic development already well established in the time of Kālidāsa who wrote '*Mayūra-pra-thāśrayiṇā guhena*' and Kumāragupta issuing his peacock-type coins, and also the several 4-5th century Gupta images of Kārttikeya.

While this feature was a new but well accepted phenomenon in the Gupta period it is conspicuous by its absence in the Kuṣāṇa age. It was assimilated presumably somewhere in between these two periods, to wit, during about the 2nd and third century A.D. Fortunately on some sculptural evidence offered by a late image of Agni from Sarnath and the Lala Bhaga Pillar, it is possible to study this evolution more clearly from the viewpoint of chronology.

<sup>1</sup> Jnana Prakasar, *op. cit.*, p. 118.



However, it appears that this additional myth of peacock was one of the results of the complete identification of Skanda-Kumāra-Kārttikeya of the Aryans and Seyon-Murugan of the Tamils. No doubt, in the south also the position of cock was no less established as the sacred bird to and the banner-device of the deity but Murugan had adopted the pea-fowl as his mount, it appears, through his spouse Valli, the hill girl fond of peacock's feather.

From the evidence available in the Sangam texts and also the Purāṇas it is, however, apparent that the cults of Kumāra-Skanda of the north and Seyon-Murugan of the Tamil country had already mingled and the different myths and legends of them both were accepted by each other in some form or the other. While in the Tamil country on one hand the entire legendary mythology of Northern Skanda was fully accepted, in the north in Purāṇic Skandism several traits of Tāmilian origin and tradition were absorbed. For example, in the *Silappadikāram*, Murugan is son of Śiva and Pārvatī, six-faced, twelve-armed, etc<sup>1</sup>. In the same way, we have in the Purāṇas associated with Skanda Valli as his consort<sup>2</sup> and peacock as his mount.

#### *Etymology of his names :*

In the Purāṇas, at several places we find attempts to offer etymological explanations of Skanda's various names of which apparently some are obscure ones and the derivations given appear to be rather forced. They say, "since he was destined to kill (*māra*) the evil (*ku*), he became *Kumāra*".<sup>3</sup> The ascetics enshrined him or his *dhyāna* in their heart, so he got the name *Guha*.<sup>4</sup> As he vanquished the demons, he was named *Skanda*.<sup>5</sup> Or, since the six bodies born separately from the six Kṛttikās were ultimately joined together as one god (*skanna*), he became *Skanda*.<sup>6</sup> He was born from the dissipated (*skanna*) energy of Śiva, so also the name *Skanda* was appropriately given to him.<sup>7</sup> The six Kṛttikās united in a single *śākhā*, and therefore he as their son was known by

<sup>1</sup> Dikshitar, *op. cit.*, pp. 94, 117, 278-80.

<sup>2</sup> For example, *Śiva Purāṇa*, Kailāsa Saṁ. 7.40, 64.

<sup>3</sup> Agrawala, *Matsya Purāṇa—a study*, p. 246.

<sup>4</sup> *Vāmana Purāṇa* 58. 1-121.

<sup>5</sup> *Skanditā dānavagaṇāḥ tasmāt skando pratāpavān*, *Brahmāṇḍa P. (I) III. 10-43*; see Patil, *Cultural History from the Vāyu Purāṇa*, pp. 63, 275. Also *devāriskandanaḥ skandah*, *Brahmāṇḍa P. (I) III. 10-51*.

<sup>6</sup> *Brahmāṇḍa P. (I) III. 10. 40-51*.

<sup>7</sup> *Skannam śukram pinākinah*, *Vāmana P. 57.3*.



the two names, *Kārttikeya* and *Viśākha*.<sup>1</sup> At the time of his very birth, it was pointed out, according to the *Vāmana Purāṇa*, by Śiva that he would be known by the several names of *Kārttikeya*, *Kumāra*, *Skanda*, *Guha*, *Mahāsena* and *Sārasvata* as the offspring of the *Kṛttikās*, *Kuṭilā*, *Gaurī*, *Śiva*, *Hutāśana* and *Saravaṇa* respectively.<sup>2</sup>

Among his other epithets which evidently reflect the various features of his character and Purāṇic personality are *Sarajanmā* or *Saravaṇabhava*, *Gāṅgeya*, *Śaṇmūtura*, *Bāhuleya*, *Śaṇmukha* or *Śaḍānana*, *Agnibhū* or *Pāvaki*, *Devasenāpati*, *Mahāsena*, *Saktidhara*, *Sikhivāhana*, *Tārakāri*, etc. These names and epithets are repeated often in the *Purāṇas* and *Kāvyas*.

A list of usual and curious names we get in the *stotra* of the god. Such a prayer marked with pleasing words is to be found twice in the *Skanda Purāṇa*, once uttered by the mountains<sup>3</sup> and on another occasion by the sage *Agastya*.<sup>4</sup> For other short prayers see *Viṣṇu-dharmottara Purāṇa*.<sup>5</sup>

The important conception about the personality of the god was, as stated by *Kālidāsa*, that he represented the energy (*tejaḥ*) of *Rudra* as deposited in the mouth of *Fire*, more resplendent than the *Sun*.<sup>6</sup> It has been emphasised repeatedly in the *Purāṇas*, and they describe the form of the god either equal in glory to the *Sun*,<sup>7</sup> or excelling even the brilliance of the *Sun*.<sup>8</sup>

As we have traced earlier, they had developed a "vyūha" of the four *Skanda* gods.<sup>9</sup> In the *Liṅga Purāṇa*,<sup>10</sup> *Śiva* is described surrounded by his four divine sons, *Naigameyādi*, i.e., *Naigameya* etc. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* has enumerated the myth of the origin of *Śākha*, *Viśākha* and *Naigameya*.<sup>11</sup> His fourfold forms, among which he himself is counted as one, are known as his brothers (*Vāyu*. 66.24), or sons (*Bhāga*. 6.14).<sup>12</sup> But in the *Viṣṇu-dharmottara*

<sup>1</sup> *Matsya Purāṇa* 159. 2-3.

<sup>2</sup> *Vāmana Purāṇa* 57. 43-45.

<sup>3</sup> *Skanda P. I.* (2) 31. vv. 80 ff.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* IV. Ch. 25.

<sup>5</sup> *VD. P. I.* 95. 25-6; I. 233. 4-12; II. 156. 7-9; III. 218. 30-32.

<sup>6</sup> *atyādityaṃ hutavahamukhe sambhṛtaṃ taddhi tejaḥ*, *Megh.* I. 43.

<sup>7</sup> *ādityatejasamkāśaḥ*, *Vāyu P.* (Ānandāśrama ed.), p. 275; *arkasadrśaḥ*, *Padma P.* I. 460.

<sup>8</sup> *vanārkabimbāpratimaprabhāya*.

<sup>9</sup> *Supra*, p. 44.

<sup>10</sup> (I) 82. 16.

<sup>11</sup> (I) 15. 115-16.

<sup>12</sup> *Supra*, pp. 29, 33.



*Purāṇa*<sup>1</sup> they are mentioned as *Caturmūrti* or *Caturātmā* of Kumāra or Skanda which are Kumāra, Skanda, Viśākha and Guha. Their form (*rūpa*) is described as follows :

“Kumāra should be made with six faces, and adorned with a tuft of hair (*śikhaṇḍaka*). He should wear red garment and ride his peacock. In his right hands should be shown a cock and a bell, and in the left ones the *Vaijayantī* banner and a spear (*śakti*).

“Skanda, Viśākha and Guha should be made like Kumāra but with a difference that they do not possess six faces and do not ride peacocks.

“It is the God Vāsudeva who has become Kumāra in order to lead the army of gods.”<sup>2</sup>

As such, Skanda with his four transformations was the lord or presiding deity of the *Grahas*, i.e., asterisms causing suffering to children. All these four, as already seen, were originally low-ranking deities, considered in popular belief as harassing the new-born babe and its mother, and when propitiated as acting their protector. It is believed that they exercise their influence for evil with demonic practices up to certain stage in the life of a child and thereafter being pleased for good. They are known as ‘*Skandagrahāḥ*’ with their four leaders<sup>3</sup>, and the only way to get rid of their ill effects was the *bali*-offering to them, and their *arcanā* (= worship) on the *Ṣaṣṭhī* day. As stated in the *Viṣṇu-dharmottara Purāṇa*, Indra with an intention to kill the new-born matchless hero, produced a host of *Mahāgrahas*, many thousand in number and provided with different weapons. They at the order of their originator went to the *Śveta* mountain to kill Skanda, but were subdued by other similar imps and demons created by

<sup>1</sup> चतुर्मूर्तेः कुमारस्य रूपं ते वच्मि यादव । कुमारश्च तथा स्कन्दो विशाखश्च गुहस्तथा ॥ VD. P. III. 71. 3.  
कुमारश्च तथा स्कन्दो विशाखश्च गुहस्तथा । चतुरात्मा विनिर्दिष्टो भगवान्क्रौञ्चदारणः ॥

VD. P. III. 218. 50.

<sup>2</sup> *kumāraḥ śaṇmukhaḥ kāryaḥ śikaṇḍakavibhūṣaṇaḥ/*  
*raktāmbaradharaḥ kāryo mayūravaraavāhanaḥ/*||4||  
*kukkūṭaśca tathā ghaṇṭā tasya dakṣiṇahastayoḥ/*  
*patākā vaijayantī ca śaktiḥ kāryā ca vāmayoḥ* ||5||  
*skando viśākhaśca guhaḥ kartavyāśca kumāravat/*  
*śaṇmukhāste na kartavyā na mayūragatāstathā/*||6||  
*caturātmā hi bhagavān vāsudevaḥ sanātanaḥ/*  
*prādurbhūtaḥ kumārastu devasenānīṣayā/*||7|| VD. P. III. 71. 3-4.

<sup>3</sup> VD. P. II. 22. 88.



Skanda. The latter group is described as greatly powerful, vigorous, moving at free will and assuming any form. Their leaders are Skanda, Viśākha and Nai-gameya, with others of which a long list of names is given in the Purāṇa. Both of the hordes, earlier created by Indra and the latter by Skanda himself, became subservient to the god Skanda and were allowed by him to take shelter in the bodies of impure persons and evil-doers. Further in the same Purāṇa signs of a seized person (*grahagrhitā*)<sup>1</sup> and also the eradictory measures to be followed for remedy are enumerated at length in four chapters.

The subject of the grahas and remedy against their infliction was no doubt of practical importance and as such included in the *Āyurveda Samhitās*. As an aspect of Skanda cult this evidence is invaluable for our study and throws ample light on the popular worship and beliefs associated with the god. Originally a goblin deity (*graha*) Skanda was elevated to the rank of a major god in the pantheon. *Bhūtavidyā*, also differently called *Grahavidyā*, is an invariable chapter found in all the *Samhitās* of *Āyurveda*. This topic occurs in the *Caraka Samhitā*<sup>2</sup> and various aspects of the beliefs and practices have found their mention already in the *Grhya Sūtras* and the epic<sup>3</sup>. The evidence of the *Suśruta Samhitā* in which the subject gets some greater attention, is similar in contents to that of the *Mahābhārata* material<sup>4</sup>.

The *Suśruta S.* gives a list of male and female grahas with the names of Revatī, Pūtanā, Śakuni and Naigameṣa which also occur in the epic. According to the *Aṣṭāṅga Saṁgraha* Śiva produced twelve grahas for the help of Skanda among whom five were male and seven female<sup>5</sup>.

The worship of Skanda and his grahas and 'mothers' was no doubt an important cult affecting domestic life in various periods and even survives today in the form of *Ṣaṣṭhī-pūjana* after the birth of a child.

Curiously enough the *Bhūtavidyā* is mentioned in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*<sup>6</sup> in a list of lores already known to Nārada when he approached Sanat-kumāra for spiritual instructions. This tradition is found continued in literature

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, II. Chs. 231-34.

<sup>2</sup> IV. *adhyā*, 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Supra*, pp. 15-6, 23-4.

<sup>4</sup> *Supra*, pp. 31-4.

<sup>5</sup> Agrawala, *Prācīn bhārtīya lokdharma*, p. 51.

<sup>6</sup> *Ch. Up.* 7. 26.2.



recording Skanda-Sanatkumāra as a teacher of Āyurveda. The fifth division of the *Aṣṭāṅga Āyurveda* is named *Kaumārabṛtya*, also called *Bāla*. It deals with the medical treatment of children and causes of their diseases including evil planetary or graha influences. Under this Tantra were included all the diseases and cures, offerings and charms covering the entire field from the conception to birth and upbringing of human progeny<sup>1</sup>. In ancient texts on medicine where this subject is dealt with we get a long list of male and female demonic spirits who tortured the mother and the babe, and also an elaborate discussion about the remedial measures (*upacāras*) which in this connection are given a special name of *abhicāra*.

The *Kāśyapa Samhitā* is the most important text in this connection, dated about fifth century A.D. Its detailed evidence is fully corroborated by that of the Purāṇas. In the *Mahābhārata*<sup>2</sup>, as already noted, Devasenā is identified with the eight goddesses as Śaṣṭhī, Lakṣmī etc. The *Kāśyapa Samhitā* takes that myth further and records that the god Guha himself said to Revatī that she would be known by many names. Vāruṇī, Revatī, Brāhmī, Kumārī, Bahuputrīkā, Śuṣkā, Śaṣṭhī Yamikā, Dharāṇī, Mukhamaṇḍikā, Śītavatī, Mātā, Kaṇḍū, Pūtanā, Niruñcika, Rodanī, Bhūtamātā, Lokamātā, Mahī, Saraṇyu and Puṇyākīrti were her twenty famous names. (*Nāmāni tava viṃśatiḥ*)<sup>3</sup>.

It appears that these goddess names whose worship was in vogue at some time became identified with one Revatī which comes before us as the most prominent goddess in the *Revatī-kalpa* of the *Kāśyapa Samhitā*, but as none else than Śaṣṭhī herself.

We have already suggested that the name Śaṣṭhī appears to be the personification of the 'sixth' day after the child-birth, and whatever goddesses whose favour was sought on this particular day for the new-born one were firstly associated and then identified as the Śaṣṭhī<sup>1</sup> goddesses. Their association with Skanda from the earliest times was quite in fitness of things as he represented the host of such wicked male seizers and afflictions.

A flood of light is offered on this question by this particular text.<sup>2</sup> It shows that Revatī had become the most powerful goddess in this age and attained the status of the Great Mother with whom all the tutelary female divinities came to be identified as her different forms. She combined in her all the qualities

<sup>1</sup> Sūram Canda, *Āyurved kā itihās*, Vol. I, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, pp. 34-5.

<sup>3</sup> Pt. Hemarāj's ed., p. 67.



and activities of the great mother, those of bestowing, fostering and destroying life of the human kind. As can be gathered from the *Kalpa* in her name, we get here culmination of the idea. She is here the highest goddess, Goddess in Essence, with whom other little goddesses get submerged and become identical. But they all are of evil character and notably concerned with infant diseases.

Revatī is of numerous forms (*bahu-rūpā*). The author of the *Revatī-kalpa*, "Scripture of Revatī", gives a peculiar myth explaining the nature of Revatī attacking the human foetus. When the battle between the Devas and Asuras was going on, a certain demon *Dirghajihvī*, of a long tongue, began to destroy the divine army. The gods prayed to Skanda for help who sent Revatī. The latter assuming the form of a she-wolf (*śālāvrkī*) not only devoured *Dirghajihvī* but also in the form of a bird (*śakuni*) caused destruction to the demon army. The Asuras took shelter in the *garbhas* of men and other creatures. But they did not remain unknown to Revatī and she in order to destroy them became *Jātahāriṇī*. And thus, she attacks in search of the demons the human progeny in its successive stages right from conception to birth. Particularly she attacks children of those who do not follow *dharma*.

She has many forms (*bahurūpā*) and is known under such names, *Jātahāriṇī*, *Revatī*, *Pilipicchikā*, *Aindrī*, and *Vāruṇī*. At the command of Skanda she stupifies all the impious persons of different castes and kills the wicked ones. The text describes in detail the impurities and wrong practices when *Jātahāriṇī* gets an opportunity to seize (*'sajjate'*) and attack.

Obviously, *Jātahāriṇī* is a general term. All the goddesses who carry away the born one (*jāta*) are to be named '*Jātahāriṇī*'. Such *Jātahāriṇī*-devīs are classified under three categories on the basis of their *sādhya* (curable), *yāpya* (lingering) and *asādhya* (incurable) nature. In the first group are *Śuṣkā*, *Revatī*, *Kaṭambharā*, *Puṣpaghnī*, *Vikuṭā*, *Parīśrutā*, *Aṇḍaghnī*, *Durdharā*, *Kālarātri*, *Mohinī*, *Stambhanī*, *Krośanā*, being possessed by whom mothers do not die. *Nākinī*, *Pīśācī*, *Yakṣī*, *Āsurī*, *Kālī*, *Vāruṇī*, *Ṣaṣṭhī*, *Bhīrukā*, *Yāmyā*, *Mātāṅgī*, *Bhadra-kālī*, *Raudrī*, *Vardhikā*, *Caṇḍikā*, *Kapālamālinī* and *Pilipicchikā* are of the *Yāpya* kind. *Vaśyā*, *Kulakṣayakarī*, *Puṣyajani*, *Pauruṣādinī*, *Sandamānī*, *Karkoṭakī*, *Indrabadhavā* and *Badhavāmukhī* are of the third *Asādhya* category.

But all are *Revatīs*. They are also grouped according to the three stages of a child, in the womb, after birth and under upbringing. On the basis of popular differences (*lokabheda*), again, *Revatī* was of three types, Divine, Human



and Tiraścīna (i.e., of birds). No doubt, these were the numerous goddesses actually worshipped in some way or the other by the people.

The Jātahāriṇī-devīs were further divided in view of the castes and classes. Each social class had its own deity, named after that. No less than twenty-nine such are listed in the *Kalpa*. Various professional groups also had their own goddess. For example, the Jātahāriṇī of the carpenters was called Takṣiṇī.

Ten such names are given : (1) *Ayaskarī* Jātahāriṇī, of ironsmiths, (2) *Takṣiṇī*, (3) *Kulālī*, of potters, (4) *Padakarī*, of cobblers, (5) *Mālākārī*, of gardeners, (6) *Kuvindī*, of weavers, (7) *Saucikī*, of tailors, (8) *Rajakī*, of dyers, (9) *Nejikā*, of washermen, (10) *Gopī*, of milkmen.

As Jātahāriṇī assimilated in herself all the folk goddesses concerning the diseases of mother and child on the one hand, Skanda became the chief of the evil grahas of infants, on the other. An elevation in his status made it due that all the goddesses and deities of similar nature were subordinated under him and his pantheon.

Bāṇa also makes important mention about Ṣaṣṭhī and Kārttikeya in the *Kādambarī*.<sup>1</sup> "Describing the birth ceremonies of Candrāpīḍa he refers to the making of a figure of Ṣaṣṭhīdevī wearing yellow clothes dyed with tumeric ; he also describes side by side the installation of a figure of Kārttikeya holding a spear and riding on a peacock."<sup>2</sup> She is named *Jātamātr̥devī* in the *Harṣacarita*<sup>3</sup> and *Bahuputrikā* in the *Kādambarī*;<sup>4</sup> who is none else than Ṣaṣṭhī herself is made clear by the *Tilakamañjarī* where the figure of Ṣaṣṭhī is described as painted on a *jātamātr̥paṭala* (tablet of Jātamātr̥).<sup>5</sup> In the latter text she is also named Āryavṛddhā,<sup>6</sup> whose worship was invariably performed in the *sūtikāgr̥ha* after the birth of a child.

Amongst the sixty-four Yoginīs, Viḍālī, Revatī and Pūtanā etc. are enumerated.<sup>7</sup> According to the *Agni Purāṇa*<sup>8</sup> by the side of Skanda image Sumukhī

<sup>1</sup> Section 64.

<sup>2</sup> Agrawala, V.S., "Goddess Ṣaṣṭhī on the Yaudheya coins", JNSI., Vol. V, pt. II, pp. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ch. 4 ; p. 129 (Nirṇayasāgar ed.).

<sup>4</sup> Sec. 64.

<sup>5</sup> P. 77 (Nirṇayasāgar ed.).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Mbh. III. 220. 16, where Āryā and Vṛddhikā occur as two goddesses.

<sup>7</sup> *Agni Purāṇa* 52. 8.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 50. 27.



and Viḍālākṣī are to be placed. We have the full-fledged Śaṣṭhīdevī legend in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*,<sup>1</sup> wherein her various forms and aspects of worship are described. It says that since she is the sixth part of Prakṛti, she is known as Śaṣṭhī. She is the presiding deity of children and famous among the mothers as Devasenā. She is spouse to Skanda and grants progeny to childless persons. On the sixth day after child-birth her worship should be performed in the *sūti-kāgrha* itself.

According to the *Kāśyapa Saṁhitā*, the gods during their battle with the demons had to seek Skanda's help. The latter acquiring their boons became dominant over all the Vasus, Rudras and Ādityas. As the text says, the Vasus originally were seven, but became eight including Skanda in the form of Dhruva the eighth. Similarly, the number of the Rudras, formerly only ten, became eleven with the eleventh one as Guha Śaṁkara. In the list of the twelve Āditya gods one more was added. That was Skanda himself as Ahaspati.

The "vyūha" or *parivāra* of the four Skanda deities developed, according to the *Kāśyapa Saṁhitā*, through a simple process. Of the four brothers, Nandikeśvara became the fifth, and Śaṣṭhī, the sixth as their sister. Sometimes Rudra also joined this group as the seventh. In their figures invariably a crescent should be shown on the head. But nowhere else this point is repeated and we find also no support of this iconographic trait from sculptures or coins. According to the *Viṣṇu-dharmottara Purāṇa*,<sup>2</sup> where the Caturmūrti conception is explained, the figures of Kumāra gods are described to bear different attributes and poses.

#### *Some other Aspects :*

On the 'Akṣaya Śaṣṭhī' day, i.e., the sixth day of Bhādrapada, the vow of Skanda-Śaṣṭhī is observed.<sup>3</sup> A similar injunction is made about the 'Caitra Śaṣṭhī' when Skanda should be worshipped with particular attention.<sup>4</sup> The month of Kārttika is also considered specially sacred to the god Kārttikeya.<sup>5</sup> The *Viṣṇu-dharmottara Purāṇa* prescribes a certain worship called *Kumāra Roca* following which the person obtains children.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Devībhāga*. IX 46.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, p. 65.

<sup>3</sup> *Agnī P.* 181. 2.

<sup>4</sup> *VD. P.* III. 221. 54.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* II. Ch. 96.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* III. 223. 18.



## V. SKANDA IN THE PURĀṆAS AND CLASSICAL LITERATURE

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Temples dedicated to Skanda are described not fit for night stay by a traveller.<sup>1</sup> A Kumāra tīrtha is known from the *Brahma Purāṇa*.<sup>2</sup> Sacred to him are also Kumāradhārā and Svāmipuṣkarīṇī.<sup>3</sup> After the *Pradakṣiṇā* of Śrīgiri, Agastya with his wife visited Skanda-vana. There he saw Skanda himself, and paid his homage to him with a prayer. Kālidāsa in the *Meghadūta*, describes the Devagiri hill as the permanent abode of Skanda.<sup>4</sup> A Skanda tīrtha is at the Narmadā.<sup>5</sup>

A certain jewel (*maṇi*),<sup>6</sup> pose (*mudrā*),<sup>7</sup> pillar,<sup>8</sup> and part of the chariot<sup>9</sup> are also said to be named after Skanda.

He is said to be the father of Viśākha<sup>10</sup> and others, and the presiding deity of the Aṅgāraka graha.<sup>11</sup> He is lord of Nirṛtis,<sup>12</sup> who are in the habit of kidnapping children. Skandin is a *piśāca gaṇa*, naked and with hanging hair, eating the leavings of others.<sup>13</sup> Similar are the names Skandika, Kumāras, etc., who all were considered subordinate to Skanda.<sup>14</sup>

A temple of Kārttikeya at Puṇḍravardhana in the Gauḍa country finds mention in the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*.<sup>15</sup> It is stated that when the Kashmiric king Jayāpīḍa reached there in the temple a performance of music and dance was being performed attracted by which he stopped there. The *Agni Purāṇa* enjoins that a shrine of Guha should be erected in the northern sector of a town<sup>16</sup>. As the story records, it was in his own temple that the god Kārttikeya appeared and revealed to his devotee the Kātantra Grammar<sup>17</sup>. Apparently these refe-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* II. 94. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Brahma P.* II. Ch. 81.

<sup>3</sup> *Skanda P.* 2(I) 1 ; 2(I) 12.

<sup>4</sup> I. 43.

<sup>5</sup> *Matsya P.* 191. 50-51.

<sup>6</sup> *VD. P.* II. 109. 63.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* III. 33. 18-20.

<sup>8</sup> *Mānasāra* 15. 19-23.

<sup>9</sup> *VD. P.* III. 23. 7.

<sup>10</sup> *Bhāga.* 6. 14 ; *Viṣṇu P.* I. 8. 11.

<sup>11</sup> *Matsya P.* 93. 13 ; *Brahma P.* II. 74. 48., 26. 33.

<sup>12</sup> *Bhāga.* 6. 14 ; *Viṣṇu P.* I. 8. 11.

<sup>13</sup> *Br. P.* III. 41. 17, and 52 ; 59. 14 ; *Patil, op. cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>14</sup> *Br. P.* III. 7. 380.

<sup>15</sup> IV. 423.

<sup>16</sup> *Agni p.* 39. 12 ; see Banerjea, *op. cit.*, p. 338.

<sup>17</sup> *Kathāsaritsāgara* I. 2. 44-61.



rences show that in this period temples dedicated to Skanda formed a cultural centre for learning and various *śāstric* arts.

It is stated that Skanda followed Pāśupata Dharma<sup>1</sup>. He is portrayed as the best of the Brahma-knowers and adored by the Brāhmaṇas<sup>2</sup>. This ideology seems to be the result of Skanda and Sanatkumāra identification which is traced as early as the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* and repeated with evolved implications in the epic and Purāṇas. It was given a curious turn in later period and in sculpture, Skanda figures even as the teacher of Śiva. He is depicted as imparting the Brahma-knowledge to his father, of which the earliest plastic representation is at Ellora<sup>3</sup>. The *Kathāsaritsāgara* mentions a Brāhmaṇa named Vyāḍi as worshipping Svāmī Kumāra for obtaining knowledge (*vidyā*)<sup>4</sup>. Similarly the Brāhmaṇa named Varṣa, who was a dullard in the beginning, obtained all branches of knowledge from Skanda after propitiating the god with his penance<sup>5</sup>. According to a story related in this text, the *Kātantra* system of Sanskrit grammar was traditionally known as originating from the six mouths of Kārttikeya. The story says that Skanda himself appeared before Śarvavarman, minister of a Sātavāhana king, and revealed to him the knowledge of a new grammar characteristic for its easy method and simplicity. As the god himself indicated, because of its brevity (*svalpatantra*) it became famous as *Kātantra*. Its second name was *Kālāpaka* or *Kālāpa* after the plumage of Skanda's peacock.<sup>6</sup> During the Gupta times the *Kālāpa* system was a big rival to that of Pāṇini as indicated in the drama *Padmaprābhṛtakam* of the *Caturbhāṇī*, and also in the Śarvavarman legend itself.<sup>7</sup> This was a system having preserved much of the material and terminology of the older Aindra School.

#### *Skanda as Sūrya's Attendant :*

According to the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*, on the left side of Sūrya there stands Skanda who is lord of the all worlds and popularly known as Daṇḍanāyaka<sup>8</sup>. On the corresponding right there is Piṅgala who is another form of Agni. Skanda

<sup>1</sup> *Skanda P.* I(1). 7. 43, *dharmah pāśupataḥ śreṣṭhaḥ skandena paripālitaḥ*]

<sup>2</sup> *Matsya Purāṇa* 185. 2-4.

<sup>3</sup> Rao, *Hindu Iconography*, Vol. II, part I, pl. cv, p. 350.

<sup>4</sup> *Kathāsarit.* I. 2. 44.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* I. 2. 60-61, and 79.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* I. 6. 13.

<sup>7</sup> *Caturbhāṇī* (Agrawala and Moti Chandra ed.), I. 23-6.

<sup>8</sup> *Bhaviṣya P.* I. 124. 13.



also figures in the other set of attendants of the Sun god, viz., of Rājña and Śrauṣa. It is clearly pointed out in the *Purāṇa* that Rājña is identical to Kārttikeya. Because he shines on the office of divine generalissimo, Kārttikeya is famous as *Rājña* which word is composed of the root *rāj* "to shine" added with the suffix *na*<sup>1</sup>. This is also supported by a late medieval work, the *Tikāsarvasva* (c. 1150) by Sarvānanda, where the author offers in a verse the equation *haraguhaṇu* = *rājaśrauṣau*<sup>2</sup>. The *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* has also given the identification of Śrauṣa with Guha<sup>3</sup>.

Apparently, the above myth was a part of the reorientated worship of the Indian Sun god in which a number of motifs and forms were accepted from the east Iranian mode of Sun worship. It appeared as an easy corollary while adopting the Iranian iconography of Sūrya to identify the Iranian attendants of the god with some deities of similar nature out of the vast Hindu pantheon. In such a scheme to make the blending complete, Śrauṣa and Rāja were accepted as identical to Skanda and Siva<sup>4</sup>.

#### *Skanda as the Deity of Thieves and Rogues :*

Another popular aspect of Skanda worship is known from a passage in the *Mṛcchakaṭika* where thieves and burglars are called *Skandaputra*<sup>5</sup>. Kārttikeya figures here as the patron-deity of such persons who lived on theft and like professions. Śarvilaka, a housebreaker, before entering the house of Cāru-datta through a breach in the wall bows to the god Kumāra-Kārttikeya for granting success in his work. The different epithets of the god with which the fellow pays his homage to him include Kanakaśakti, Brahmanyadeva, and Devavrata<sup>6</sup>. A few lines earlier, Kanakaśakti ("whose weapon is the golden *śakti*") figures as an *ācārya* of the *Caurya-śāstra* whose injunctions about breach are quoted by the thief. Pṛthivīdhara, the commentator of the drama, takes the phrase *skandaputra* as meaning "*skandopajīvī caurācārya*," i.e., teachers of burglary making a living by invoking Skanda. As pointed out by Dr. Sandesra, *skanda* also means "to attack"<sup>7</sup>, and in this context perhaps signifies in general the low practices

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* I. 124. 21-3, 34.

<sup>2</sup> Sen, "Iranian Śrauṣa and Indian Skanda", *Indo-Iranica*, Vol. IV, i (July 1950), p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> *Bhaviṣya P.* I. 124. 21.

<sup>4</sup> See also *supra*, p. 7 fn.

<sup>5</sup> *Mṛcchakaṭika*, act III.

<sup>6</sup> *Namovaradāya kumārakārttikeyāya namaḥ kanakaśaktaye brahmanyadevāya devavratāya.*

<sup>7</sup> Sandesra, "Pṛacīn sāhitya men cauraśāstra" (The Science of Theft in Ancient Literature), *Bhāratīya Sāhitya* (Munshi Abhinandan Volume, Year 3, Jan. 1958), p. 293-4.



followed by rogues and bandits, looters and marauders and similar sections of society. They regarded Skanda their patron-deity. It is clear from the *Mṛcchakatika* and appears to have had its footing in the earlier tradition which regarded Skanda as the god of *Dhūrtas* and the patron-deity of warring tribes. This aspect of Skanda seems to have continued in later periods also<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> A verse from the Gujrāṭī folklore reflects the connection of Skanda with thieves who regarded him their lord. As it says, "O Gaurī! Your son is remembered by sweet peacocks. In day time he is remembered by merchants and at night by thieves."

गवरी ! तारा पुत्रेन समरे मधुरा मोर ।

दी'ए समरे बाणिया ने राते समरे चोर ॥

*Ibid.* p. 294.

In northern India and specially in Bengal the god Skanda was regarded as the deity of *ganikās* also;



## CHAPTER VI

## EVIDENCE OF ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY: GUPTA PERIOD

As we have seen in an earlier chapter, Skanda was the presiding deity of certain ancient republics and tribes. He was the lord of war and favoured as their state-god by such war-like communities as those of the Yaudheyas and Audumbaras<sup>1</sup>. There is hardly any doubt that the Yaudheyas had dedicated their state to the god and the Gaṇa was ruled only on his behalf as shown by their coins. It is a fact that in the pre-Christian period there were also some other states ruling in the name of their spiritual lord. In the early centuries of the Christian era such republican peoples and tribes, no doubt, suffered ups and downs in their fortunes but the rank of their presiding deity became more influential in the pantheon. In the time of foreign invasions and the rule of the Śakas and Kuṣāṇas it was natural to such freedom-loving peoples and martial chiefs that they should render services in the name of the war-god. It is believed by some scholars that it were the Yaudheyas who inflicted a crushing blow on the Kuṣāṇa rule, and in doing so they seem to have invoked the succour of their national deity Skanda.

The reigning period of the two Gupta emperors, Kumāragupta I and his son Skandagupta, was the golden age of Kārttikeya worship. It should however be noted that the name Kumāragupta, given by the Paramabhāgavata Mahārājādhirāja Candragupta to his eldest son would indicate, no doubt, some obvious religious faith of that king in god Kumāra-Skanda. Kumāragupta, though styled Paramabhāgavata as usual in the dated Gadghwa stone inscription and on coins, was a strong devotee of Skanda<sup>2</sup>. He built, according to the Bilsad inscription, a temple of god Svāmī Mahāsenā with accessory contingents of a *pratolī* and a column<sup>3</sup>. He issued the 'peacock type' or the 'Kārttikeya type' coins. This fact also is of no small value that on a variety of his coin type, for the Garuḍa symbol on the Garuḍadhvaja top a peacock was substituted by the king which was the banner-device of his beloved deity (*ishta-devatā*)<sup>4</sup>. We do

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Fleet, CII, III, No. 9, pp. 40-41. Allan, *BMC, CGD.*, pp. 89 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Fleet, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-5.

<sup>4</sup> *Classical Age*, p. 449.



not see here an instance of the dedication of the state to the war-god though apparently Kumāragupta who considered himself an incarnation of Skanda, as the legend *mahendrakumārah*, i.e., Mahendra as Kumāra, repeated both an obverse and reverse of the Peacock Type and the bare headed and bare bodied figure of the king on obverse with peacock show.

The main variety of this type of coins issued by Kumāragupta is described by Dr. Altekar as below :

*Obverse*—King, nimbate, standing three-fourths to left, bare headed and bare bodied, but with waist-band round the waist, whose ends hang down behind him, wearing short *sakaccha dhotī*, necklace and wristlets, offering by his right hand a twig of grapes to peacock in his front, left hand hanging down and resting on hips. Usually king wears a curious conical ornament on the top of his head. Circular legend not fully read. *Reverse*—God Kārttikeya nimbate, three-fourths to left sitting on peacock perched on a platform, holding a spear in left hand resting on waist and right hand bent up, opened out and scattering some round objects, apparently puroḍāśas on an indistinct object before him, probably an altar. The god is bare headed, had profuse hair and is bare bodied; he wears ear-rings and necklace. No symbol. Legend on right *Śrī Mahendra-Kumārah*<sup>1</sup>.

It is also noteworthy that on reverse of class II of the Horseman type and the Tiger-slayer type of coins, the Goddess Lakṣmī is also represented, seated holding lotus in left hand, and feeding the peacock with a bunch of grapes held in her right hand. The peacock on these coins is evidently the emblem of Skanda.

Dr. Altekar writes: "Kumāragupta was named after Skanda alias Kumāra, whose mount was peacock. His Kārttikeya type, which is an innovation of the reign, was obviously intended to be a numismatic homage to the deity after whom he was named. One would naturally have expected that the coin of this type should have been issued in large numbers; but somehow such is not the case. It is no doubt stated by Smith that the Allahabad hoard consisted of 200 coins, mostly of the Peacock type (J. A. S. B., 1884, p. 152), but his information was based on hearsay report. The Bayānā hoard contains only 13 coins of this type, as against 183 of the Archer type and 305 of the Horseman type. The British Museum has 9 coins of this type, the Indian Museum 5 and the

<sup>1</sup> Altekar, *G.G.C. in the Bayana Hoard*, p. 272.

<sup>2</sup> Allan, *op. cit.*, Introduction, p. xcii.



Lucknow Museum 2. It would appear that the idea of issuing the Kārttikeya type was conceived late in the reign<sup>1</sup>."

It seems, however, quite plausible that Kumāragupta had dedicated himself to Skanda worship from his early life, as is indicated also by the introduction of a peacock on the reverse side of his coin types and given to his eldest son, the name Skanda. His devotion to the god must have increased greatly in the later part of his reign. As Dr. Banerjea points out: "Kumāragupta was certainly in urgent need of the graces of the War-god Kārttikeya, for the last period of his rule was troubled by the ruthless invasions of the Hūṇas and the Puṣyamitras, and his special predilection for this martial god is also manifest in the name of one of his sons, viz., Skanda, if not of himself<sup>2</sup>."

The Bilsar inscription of Skandagupta makes a mention of Skanda and the divine Mothers. The record is damaged and not enough of it remains to give a clear indication of its purport.<sup>3</sup> A temple of the divine Mothers was built by a minister of Viśvavarman who was contemporary to Kumāragupta, is recorded by the Gangadhār stone inscription.<sup>4</sup> The recently acquired Supia inscription of the time of Skandagupta is of utmost value for the religious history of the period as it records the consecration of an image of the goddess Śaṣṭhī by one Chandaka.<sup>5</sup> However, it is a hard fact that the plastic representations of Śaṣṭhī are very rare and her image alone is unknown. In fact, with her spouse Skanda she is portrayed as Devasenā. It is needless here to say about the identification of the goddess Śaṣṭhī with Devasenā which has been noted earlier with so much emphasis. As the mention in the inscription shows the image of the goddess set up by Chandaka was most probably independent and she as the deity of child-birth figured there by her own virtue and not in the company of her consort.

In the short inscription on a clay-sealing from Rajghat of the Gupta period, we have the proper name *Śaṣṭhīdatta*.<sup>6</sup> It shows clearly the affiliations of the goddess with child-birth and how the child taken to be her gift was named after

<sup>1</sup> Altekar, *op. cit.*, Introd., p. cl.

<sup>2</sup> Banerjea, *loc. cit.*, p. 144, fn. 1.

<sup>3</sup> CII, III, p. 49.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 74, 76.

<sup>5</sup> Chhabra, B. Ch., "A newly discovered Stone Inscription of Skandagupta's Reign" *Proc. of the All-India Oriental Conference*, XII, Vol. III, pp. 588-9.

<sup>6</sup> Agrawala, *Prachin Bhartiya Lokdharma*, p. 61.



the goddess. Another Śaṣṭhidatta is known from the Mandisor stone inscription of Yaśodharman-Viṣṇuvardhana of the Mālava year 589<sup>1</sup>. He was the founder of the Aulikara family, and it appears, had got his name from the goddess by whose grace his birth was believed to be due. Similarly, the name Kumāradatta occurring in the Mayākadoni inscription of Siri Pulumāvi (of about 150 A. D.) would show that parents considered their child as a boon from the deity<sup>2</sup>.

From many other epigraphs we know a number of such personal names current in the contemporary period which were derived from Skanda's names and epithets. They are, no doubt, indicative of the religious belief of the people. For example in the Camaka Praśasti of Vākātaka king Pravarasena II, we have names like Kumāraśarmā, Guhaśarmā, Skandārya, Svāmidevārya. Many similar names formed after the deity may also be collected from other inscriptions.

His position as the war-god was similarly very high as epigraphic and art evidence shows in the Deccan and South of 2nd to 4th century and his cult had gained wide popularity as shown earlier. The Kadamba rulers took pride in saying that from the time of their earliest ancestor they were favoured by Mahāsenā and the Mothers. It was by the grace of god Śaḍānana that a Kadamba chief was anointed to the office of a general. Some Ikṣvāku rulers were also greatly devoted to the god and offered their full patronage to his worship as is gleaned from the survived ruins of temples and images in their territory. Religious inclination of the early Pallavas towards the gods of Śaiva pantheon is also well known in which Skanda did occupy a prominent position. There is hardly any doubt that in these territories their successors continued the tradition with the same devotion and zeal.

His wide popularity in the Deccan is known from epigraphs. The Nala kings of the former Bastar state had alleged their special devotion to the god. The king Bhavattavarman attributed his success to the favour of Mahāsenā and his Skanda *bhakti* was apparently responsible for the name of his son Skandavarman<sup>3</sup>.

The expression is also repeated in the case of Arthapati's Kesaribeda plates :

*maheśvara-mahāsenātisṛṣṭa-rājya-vibhavaḥ*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> CII, III, p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> *Select Ins.*, p. 205.

<sup>3</sup> Yazdani (ed.), *Early History of the Deccan*, p. 198 ; Rithapur CP., *Ep. Ind.*, XIX, p. 100 ff.



This epithet is generally interpreted by scholars as signifying "who has made over his kingdom and wealth to the great god Mahāsenā (or to Maheśvara Śiva and Mahāsenā).<sup>2</sup> But Dr. Mirashi would take it otherwise and translate: "who has obtained his kingdom and wealth by the grace of the great lord Mahāsenā."<sup>3</sup>

Almost the same expression was earlier known from a Bhita seal discovered by John Marshall. It referred to some illustrious *Vindhyabheda mahārāja Gautamīputra Vṛṣadhvaṇa*.<sup>4</sup> It is not unlikely that the Nalas and this Gautamīputra had some connection but of what nature is not clear. Although the existence of the pious custom of entrusting one's kingdom and fortune to one's *iṣṭadevatā* is known from the case of the Yaudheyas who ruled their kingdom as considering themselves mere agents of Kumāra-Mahāsenā, this appears, however, less convincing in the above passages.

The popularity of the belief of considering the certain royal house as created or protected by god Skanda and the Mothers is borne out for the contemporary period by the records of the Kadambas and the Cālukyas.

The Cālukyas of Bādami are proud in their inscriptions in claiming to have reared by the seven mothers who are the mothers of worlds and to have acquired a series of fortunes through the grace and protection of Kārttikeya. They are described as meditating upon, or favoured by the feet of the holy Svāmī Mahāsenā.<sup>5</sup>

### *Paramabrahmaṇya :*

Like *Paramabhāgavata* and *Paramamāheśvara*, certain kings gloried in earning for themselves the title *Paramabrahmaṇya*, which appears to be indicative of their Brahmaṇya or Skanda *bhakti*. At the earliest, it occurs in the Narasaraopet copper-plate of Simhavarman about 6-7th century.<sup>6</sup> In a copper-plate inscription of Śaśāṅka dated Gupta era 300 (= 619 A. D.) the *mahārājasāmanta* Mādha-varāja is called *paramabrahmaṇya*, i. e., great devotee of Brahmaṇya. This

<sup>1</sup> J B R S., XXXIV, pp. 32 f.

<sup>2</sup> Marshall, ASI-AR, 1911-12, p. 25; Jayaswal, *History of India*, p. 228; Banerjea, *loc. cit.*, p. 156-7.

<sup>3</sup> Mirashi, *Studies in Indology*, Vol. I, pp. 192-3.

<sup>4</sup> Marshall, *op. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> *Classical Age*, p. 228.

<sup>6</sup> *Ep. Ind.*, XV, 254 ff.



title was also adopted by the Eastern Cālukyās, like Ammarāja II Vijayāditya IV.<sup>1</sup>

*Iconography and Images :*

A curious stone image of Agni from Sarnath provides an important study for Skanda iconography. It cannot be dated earlier than the seventh century, though illustrates an old theme elaborated in earlier literature. It shows a standing male figure clad in *dhotī*, whose portion above the waist is defaced and head and arms are fully gone. He is to be identified with Agni as the flames of fire are shown all round emanating from his body. On the two sides are portrayed two miniature figures in comparison to the main deity. The person on his right is no doubt Kārttikeya with his peacock. The head is obliterated but the god is shown as a boy or Kumāra standing with some unidentified object in his left hand and in the background is a peacock looking inside with its feathured tail spread out beautifully. The figure on the right side, now badly damaged, has a cock at the back which also is looking to the inner side.

This sculpture is of utmost value for several points. In it we have the plastic representation of the well known relationship of Agni and Kārttikeya, perhaps the latter depicted here in his two forms, Skanda and Viśākha. As could be gleaned from literature and also from art, the bird associated with Skanda in earlier tradition was cock. Nowhere in the Kuṣāṇa period the peacock is found with him which became adopted as his vehicle later and was shown so freely in Gupta art. This panel from Sarnath indicates the transitional stage when a change in the *vāhana* of the god was taking place. In one form he is with cock and in another with peacock. It should be noted that usually Kukkuṭa was not shown as the vehicle of the deity but it accompanied him in sculpture as being held in one of his hands. As such it continued to be his favourite bird and emblem even when in the Gupta period a peacock served the god as his mount.

In both of his forms Skanda figures here as a boy, or young hero, Kumāra. This is a noted iconographic point in the texts and actual representations. In another Agni figure from Lacchagir<sup>2</sup>(in Allahabad District), of about 700 A.D., one of the two attendants of the god shows a goat's face, and testifies thus the association of Agni and the goat-headed form of Skanda-Naigameya. A beautiful

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* IX, p. 133. Cf. also XV, p. 152, for Yuddhamalla.

<sup>2</sup> JUPHS, New Series, Vol. II, pt. 2, 1954, p. 36, pl. VI.



terracotta figurine recovered from the depth of the river Yamunā, now in the Mathura Museum shows the boy god seated on the back of a peacock. A portion of its right side is broken ; but in its imposing character it excels any other image. With a charming, sharp outlined face marked by the tenderness and smile of an adolescent, elongated ears, shaven head up to *śikhaṇḍaka* locks in three parts, and a halo round it, it impresses by its beauty and expression. In his right hand the god holds a cock and the left his characteristic weapon, a *śakti*. He wears round the neck an ornament made of a pair of tiger's nails (*baghanak*) on the two sides of a round plaque.<sup>1</sup>

This object is also seen in the images of Kṛṣṇa as a boy.<sup>2</sup> It appears to be the usual practice in this period according to which a boy was given this ornament as protection against an evil eye. It typified in an image the boyish or Kumāra form of the god.

A carved relief of considerable size (2'6") from Mathurā shows Skanda riding on a peacock. It is iconographically important as depicting the Abhiṣeka of Skanda being performed by the two figures holding inverted jars on the head of the god. They have been indentified as Rudra and Brahmā and show the consecration of Skanda to the office of divine commander-in-chief. As Dr. V. S. Agrawala describes it in his *Mathurā Catalogue*<sup>3</sup> : "Skanda wears his hair in matted locks with a pair of loose locks falling on shoulders, has elongated ears, wears an ekāvalī necklace and armlets. He holds a *śakti* in left hand and the right hand is damaged. Kārttikeya is being anointed (*abhiṣeka*) as the commander of the divine forces (Deva-senā) by four-faced Brahmā (only three of his faces being visible) on right, and Śiva on left, both having matted locks and wearing girdles. They hold jars in hands pouring sacred water on the head of Skanda who became the Senānī of the gods to lead their armies in the battle against the demon Tārakāsura. Behind Brahmā and Śiva are two other smaller figures. The one to the right is headless, that on the left is goat-faced and holds what looks like a trident in raised hand. T. Gopinath Rao in describing the figure of Kārttikeya from Ellora says : There are on either side a goat-headed attendant of Subrahmaṇya ; one of these must be Dakṣa Prajāpati, who is said to be one of the *parivāra-devatās* of Subrahmaṇya (*Elements of Hindu Iconography*, Vol. II,

<sup>1</sup> Agrawala, V. S., *Mathurā Kalā* (in Hindi), p. 77 ; *Handbook of the Sculptures in the Curzon Museum of Archaeology, Muttra*, fig. 40.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Govardhanadhārī Kṛṣṇa in the Bharat Kala Bhavan.

<sup>3</sup> Agrawala, *Mathurā Museum Catalogue, Brahmanical Images*, p. 40,



p. 446, pl. CXXIV). The goat-faced figure on our sculpture may be Dakṣa, but it can also be taken to be the ram-headed *vāhana* of Agni, who has intimate connection with the iconography of Svāmī Kārttikeya.

“The peacock is boldly carved and stands facing with its wings spread on both sides. The plumage is carved at the back in the form of a halo. The feet of the deity and his vehicle are missing. The sculpture belongs to the Gupta period.”

Obviously, the goat-headed attendants of the Mathura relief may be identified on the literary grounds with Chāgavaktra Naigameya who figures as a member of Skanda's retinue. The motif of the anointing of Skanda by Brahmā and Rudra is given in the *Līṅga Purāṇa*<sup>1</sup> in clear words and from its plastic corroboration seems to be an accepted motif of Skanda mythology.

Of other noteworthy figures of Kārttikeya in the Mathurā Museum two may be mentioned here as they show simple iconographic features of the standing god with a spear in one of his hands and a cock or *abhaya mudrā* in the other.<sup>2</sup> They are to be placed earlier than the *Peacock* type and perhaps about the 3rd cent. A.D.

A standing Skanda image of the same period and of the same type is now in the National Museum and originally came from Mathura. It shows the god, one-faced, standing, clad in *dhotī* and holding a *śakti* in his left hand and the right displaying *abhaya* pose. It is almost similar to the dated Kuṣāṇa statue in its posture, and neck and head ornaments, which has been described earlier.<sup>3</sup>

It appears that while the Kuṣāṇa artists conceived the god in standing posture the Gupta masters showed their likeness in portraying him as seated on peacock. This type is represented by the Bhumara, Bharat Kala Bhavan and Shahabad images and the illustration of the god on the coins of Kumāragupta. One of the larger medallions from the Bhumara temple contains a figure of Kārttikeya, with one head and two hands, seated on the back of his peacock. In his right hand he holds a spear and in the left a round object to be identified as *mātulūṅga* (citron). The necklace in his neck consists of a big circular pendant. The pointed tiger's talons flanking the middle plaque on either side are absent in this case.

<sup>1</sup> *Līṅga Purāṇa* I. 57. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Agrawala, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>3</sup> Pl. VII; *supra*, p. 26



The Śeṣasāyī *rathikā-bimba* of the Deogarh temple shows in the group of five aerial divinities Kārttikeya on his peacock. He wears the similar *baghanak* necklace and the hair is in the form of loose locks.

The highest attainment from the point of artistic merit we see in the form of the Kala Bhavan example of which the exact provenance is unknown, but which came from somewhere in Uttar Pradesh. In its iconographic details and spiritual expression it could only be compared with the representation of Skanda on the Mayūrāṅka coins of Kumāragupta, already described above.

The god is seated on the back of his mount peacock (*mayūraprsthāśraya*) whose neck and beak appear in front of his waist, and the plumage is arranged at the back of his body in the form of a halo. Its features so distinctly carved are put 'to such exquisite decorative uses in the composition' that they extract praise from critics. The god Kumāra sits in the *lalitāsana*. "The beautifully poised figure has indeed all mystery, the grandeur, and solidity of an epic form". His face is characteristic of the divine grace and the body of a general. His boyish form is indicated as usual by a *baghnak* ornament round the neck and *kākapakṣa* hair on the head. Other ornaments consist of large ear-*kuṇḍalas* and armlets. In his left hand he holds a heavy *śakti* and in the right a fruit on which the bird is shown pecking.

The Patna Museum image of Skanda (Mus. No. 6003), which came from the Shahabad District (Bihar) is similar in conception to the one described above, except for the right hand held in *abhaya mudrā*. The *mayūra-prsthāśrayī* god bears a *śakti* in his left hand, and has *kuṇḍalas* in the ears, and typical necklace with *baghnak* and *padaka*. The characteristic headgear is made up in typical fashion of three *śikhaṇḍakas*.

The sculpture enshrined in the Udaigiri cave-temple No. 3 is probably an image of Kārttikeya who bears a *daṇḍa* in his right hand. The left one is damaged but originally rested on the hip. The necklace, armlets and the head-dress of the figure are similar to the standing Mathura image of the Gupta period.<sup>1</sup> The dress and personal embellishment of the figure in this case are, in fact, very impressive. The peacock is missing and leaves the identification doubtful. The *daṇḍa*-holding figure in Cave 6 is also perhaps of Skanda. The *kākapakṣa* hair and *daṇḍa* may characterise it as Skanda though the position of it on the front entrance wall of the cave would allow us to take it only a dvārapāla figure.

<sup>1</sup> See above p. 82.



The standing Skanda figure from Tumain (anc. Tumbavana) is a little masterpiece of the Gupta period. The boy god stands in easy posture with a long spear almost equal to his height. With his right hand he feeds his pet bird, standing at his back. His body is slightly turned to the left and the elastic grace inherent in it appears as a masterly touch by the artist. The ornaments consist of a *baghnak* type necklace, round ear-plaques, armlets and bangles. The hair on the head is made with care with three projecting *śikhaṇḍas* or tufts which form a characteristic feature of Skanda's coiffure in later images.<sup>1</sup>

A beautiful Gandhāra representation of the war-god is now in the British Museum, and came from Kafir-kot. The god with a lance in his right hand and a cock in the left is portrayed as dressed in warrior's typical dress. The figure is haloed and there can be no doubt about its identification. Its date may be assigned to the 3rd-4th century A.D.<sup>2</sup> Another figure from Gandhāra, now in the Baroda Museum, but of later date, is similar as it is haloed figure of a deity clad as warrior and with a heavy spear. But in the absence of the bird it could be identified as Skanda only doubtfully.<sup>3</sup>

It will be found useful to analyse here the iconographic features of Kārttikeya images in Gupta period. The injunctions made in this connection in the texts describe the form of the god and his image with increased number of heads and arms though in plastic representations he is shown only with one head and two arms. No doubt, Kumāra Mahāsenā appeared on some of the Yaudheya coins as six-headed but in none of the sculptures until the medieval period this form is repeated.

In the Kuṣāṇa images Skanda is portrayed as a standing figure with his attributes *śakti* and *kukkūṭa* (or *abhayamudrā*) in the two hands from which his identity is revealed. He is conceived in this period obviously like Maitreya Bodhisattva clad in *dhōṭī*, standing erect without any *bhaṅga* (or curve) with a triangular necklace and a prominent plaque in the headdress. He appears as a youth of tender age, but the ornaments which characterise his boyish form in the later period are absent. He is usually not shown in a sitting posture and all the images of Kuṣāṇa and Ikṣvāku period are of *sthānaka* variety.

<sup>1</sup> See Puri image, *DHI*, pl. XVII 1; Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture in the Philadelphia Museum of Art*, pls. 9-10 (of about 11 th cent.).

<sup>2</sup> Pl. X.

<sup>3</sup> Goetz, *Bulletin of the Baroda State Museum*, Vol. III, pt. II (1948), pl. to the article "Iranian or Buddhist Deity".



Important features of the Skanda image in Gupta times may be noted as follows :

- (1) Both in standing and seated forms.
- (2) In standing images, peacock is shown behind the deity. In the seated variety the god is shown poised on the back of the bird whose fan-tail with widespread plumes frames the god as *prabhāvalī*.
- (3) He is shown as a boy or Kumāra with two hands and one head. His upper body is usually bare while he puts on a *dhōti* as the undergarment.
- (4) His characteristic attributes are *śakti* and a cock. The *śakti* is held in his hand and sometimes equals in height the figure itself. In certain cases a cock is shown held by the god in his other hand and also a fruit (probably *mātulūṅga*).
- (5) The personal embellishments typifying his boyish or Kumāra form are a *baghnak* necklace formed of a roundel and two tiger's nails on sides, and a peculiar headdress marked either by loose *kākapakṣa* hair, or arranged locks in three *śikhaṇḍas*. The latter form is the most common in Gupta and later images.

In words of the *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* the following was the simple formula of Skanda image :

"Skanda should be made as a boy (*kumārarūpa*) holding spear (*śaktidhara*) and with a peacock (*barhiketu*)."<sup>1</sup> Though the *Viṣṇu-dharmottara Purāṇa* prescribes six heads in the case of Kumāra figure, it enjoins that only one face should be shown of Skanda, Viśākha and Guha and they should not be shown moving on the peacock.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the latter interdiction means the position of the bird behind or by the side of the god. The *Matsya Purāṇa* describes three different forms of Kārttikeya on the basis of his arms :

- (1) with two arms,
- (2) with four arms, and
- (3) with twelve arms ;

and says that the two-armed image is appropriate for a village, the four-armed

<sup>1</sup> *Skandaḥ kumārarūpaś śaktidhara barhiketuśca*, *Bṛhat. S.* 57. 58.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, pp. 64-5



for a jungle and the twelve-armed for a city.<sup>1</sup> If the image is two-armed it should grasp *śakti* in left and cock in right. In four-armed variety the left ones should hold *śakti* and *pāśa*, and the right ones sword and *varada* or *abhayada mudrā*. Not a single image of the Gupta period displays four arms and the twelve armed type is rare even in the late medieval period.

A wall relief in Badami Cave I of about 600 A.D. shows a *mayūravāhana* figure which may be identified as Kārttikeya. The god is depicted riding on a gigantic peacock in comparison to his size and holds in his right hand a goad. He wears an undergarment, torque around the neck, big ear-pendants, and bangles and an *upavīta*. This relief appears to be quite a simple conception of the war-god who is here not only shown seated awkwardly on the huge bird but whose mighty weapon is also missing.<sup>2</sup>

### *Skanda as Śiva's Guru :*

A large panel in the Rāmeśvara cave at Ellora shows several interesting scenes from Śiva's life.<sup>3</sup> The one on the extreme left of it depicts Skanda as Śiva's teacher. He is seen imparting the mystic knowledge of *praṇava* to his father. As T.A.G. Rao describes it: "Subrahmanya with six heads (of which three are visible in the sculpture) is seated on a high pedestal with a *ṛṣi*; one of his right hands is held in the *cin-mudrā* pose, while the other is kept with outstretched fingers. One left hand is resting upon his lap. He wears the colth in the *upavīta* fashion; the legs are hanging below the seat and resting upon the ground. The *ṛṣi* has also both his legs hanging down the seat and seems to have his hands kept in the *añjali* pose. In front of Subrahmanya is seated cross-legged on the ground Śiva with his right hand held in the *jñāna-mudrā* pose and the left one resting, in the *yoga-mudrā* pose, on his lap. He also wears his upper garment in the *upavīta* fashion"<sup>4</sup>.

The art from Rajasthan and North Gujarat of the late Gupta and the Maitaka period also bears testimony that the worship of Skanda with other

<sup>1</sup> Banerji, *Eastern Indian School of Medieval Sculpture*, p. 118. *Sthāpayastṣveṣṭanagare bhujān dvādaśa kārayet/ caturbhujāḥ kāryate syādvane grāme dvibhāhukāḥ/ dvibhujasya kare śaktivṛāme syātkukkuṭopari/ caturbhujē śaktipāśau vamatō dakṣiṇe tvasi/ varado' bhayado vāpi dakṣiṇaḥ syātturīyakāḥ/ Mastya Purāṇa* 260. 47, 50-51.

<sup>2</sup> Zimmer, *The Art of Indian Asia*, Vol. II, pl. 137.

<sup>3</sup> Illustrated by Rao, *loc. cit.*, Vol. II, pt. i, pl. cv.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 350, See also above, p. 71.



Śaiva deities continued in this region. Images of Skanda found from Sāmālājī,<sup>1</sup> Kapuri,<sup>2</sup> Karvan<sup>3</sup> and Baroda<sup>4</sup> are good specimens of the post-Gupta sculpture in North Gujarat. The image from Sāmālājī, a little masterpiece of the period, shows the god carrying a long lance in his right hand and holding a cock with the left hand placed akimbo. He puts on a *dhoti* and on the bare upper body his characteristic necklace and armlets. The warrior nature of the god is emphasised by the massive built of the body with fleshy arms and strong shoulders. The static erect posture undoubtedly damages its majestic grace, otherwise the figure is a fine conception from the aesthetic point of view.

Another beautiful sculpture comes from Baroda. Its head is missing. The standing god in his left hand bears a cock and in the right his *śakti*. His mount is represented behind him. The new feature is the big garland which reaches below the knees. Other Skanda images which appear to represent the Gurjara-Partihāra style are obtained from Nagar,<sup>5</sup> Kakuni,<sup>6</sup> Bairat,<sup>7</sup> Hathai,<sup>8</sup> Kapuri<sup>9</sup> (near Baroda) and Roda<sup>10</sup>. Seated Skanda on peacock with lance and *baghnak* necklace from Nagar preserves the best influences of Gupta traditions. Similar is the image from Hathai in which the peacock appears near the left leg.

The Kakuni relief is important as it illustrates Kārttikeya with six hands carrying a citron fruit, bow and *carma* (= shield) in the left ones and a *śakti* and sword in the two remaining right hands. This form with six hands may be well identified with Śaravaṇabhava as known from the *Strī-tattvanidhi* and described by Rao<sup>11</sup>. According to the text he should have only one face with three eyes and six arms, be of the colour of the rising sun and be seated upon a lion. The last feature does not find corroboration from the sculpture, and attributes to

<sup>1</sup> Shah, *Sculptures from Sāmālājī and Roḍhā*, p. 66; Majumdar, M. R. (Gen. ed.), *Chronology of Gujarat*, p. 204.

<sup>2</sup> *Bulletin of the Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery*, Vol. VIII, pt. 1 (1950-52), pl. VIII.

<sup>3</sup> *Chronology of Gujarat*, p. 204.

<sup>4</sup> *Bulletin of the Baroda M. etc.*, Vol. VIII, pt. 1, pl. VIII; Shah, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

<sup>5</sup> Agrawala, R. C., "Skanda-Kārttikeya in Sculptures from Rajasthan, *Lalit Kala*, Nos. 3-4 (1956-57), p. 109, pl. III, 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* p. 110, pl. LII, 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. 110, fig. on p. 112.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* p. 111.

<sup>9</sup> *Baroda Mus. Bulletin*, Vol. VIII, pt. 1, pl. IX.

<sup>10</sup> Shah, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

<sup>11</sup> Rao, *loc. cit.*, Vol. II, pt. II, p. 436.



be shown in the six arms also greatly differ. The sculpture from Bairat is interesting as it shows three-faced Skanda with four arms. Another similar Kārttikeya with three heads has come from a niche of some temple at Rodha. In such examples the visible three heads represented the six-headed form of the deity, the other set of three heads being conceived on the invisible back side.

*Kaumārī :*

The female counterpart of Skanda is Kaumārī. In the seven Mātṛkā group, she was included as early as the Kuṣāṇa period. As a member of the Saptamātṛkās, she is usually represented with the attributes of her spouse, śakti, and later on also a peacock. According to the simple injunction made by Varāhamihira the mothers are made with cognisances of the gods corresponding to their names<sup>1</sup>.

Amongst the Mātṛkā-group figures mention should be made of those from Udaigiri<sup>2</sup> and Besnagar<sup>3</sup>. Both of them are unfortunately in a damaged state of preservation. The rock-cut Aṣṭamātṛkā group at Mandor includes a two-armed Kaumārī figure whose identity is revealed by a peacock appearing behind her<sup>4</sup>. Another similar group is also known from Abānerī of about 8th century<sup>5</sup>.

Independent images of Kaumārī are known from Sāmalājī<sup>6</sup>, Abu<sup>7</sup> and Karvan<sup>8</sup> in Northern Gujrat. "The two hands of Kaumārī from Sāmalājī, Devānī Morī, are mutilated ; but the peacock is significant. The *ekāvalī* necklace, the beaded armlets, the lower fine texture garment with numerous creases, the beautiful modelling of the torso, the graceful locks of hair falling over shoulders—these are undoubtedly Gupta features. The goddess has a charming round face, with broad forehead adorned with a round *tilaka* and large eyes ; the lower lip is thick and a little protuding. A scarf running across her legs and passing over her left hand is remarkable. The girdle with central tassel-like hanging is also noteworthy. Peacock is of a fine workmanship."<sup>9</sup> One of the three preserved sculptures of Mātṛkās in the Delvāḍā Jagannathā temple is of seated

<sup>1</sup> *Matṛigaṇaḥ kartavyaḥ svanāmadevānurūpakṛtaciḥnaḥ*, *Brhat Samhitā* 57. 56.

<sup>2</sup> Patil, *Monuments of the Udaigiri Hill*, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Drivedi, *Gwalior rājya ki murtikalā* (Vikrama-Smṛti Grantha), p. 701, see pl. facing it.

<sup>4</sup> Agrawala, R. C., *op. cit.*, 109-110.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 110.

<sup>6</sup> *Chronology of Gujarat*, p. 206, pl. XXXVII.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. 205, pl. same.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 276. pl. XXXVII.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p. 206.



Kaumārī, and "closely allied to the Īdar group in modelling and style"<sup>1</sup>. She is shown with Śakti in her right hand and a child in the other. Her head-dress displays the characteristic three-*sikhāṇḍa* style, and in front of her near the right leg is the peacock. In its present state of preservation it is much worn, but must have been a masterpiece of post-Gupta art. From Karvan is found a Kaumārī image in dancing pose.<sup>2</sup> It is no doubt of unique significance and datable to the 8-9th century.

*Abhiṣeka of Kārttikeya to the office of divine generalissimo :*

The motif of Skanda's *Abhiṣeka* to the office of divine commander-in-chief forms pleasant theme of an image slab from Kanauj<sup>3</sup> datable to the 6th-7th century on stylistic grounds. It is a beautiful sculpture which exhibits late Gupta traditions in their accomplished expression. The god is shown seated on a seat with lion-rests on either side. The peacock *vāhana* of the god is also seen in a curious position below the seat as if carrying him on its back. The god sits in the *lalita* posture and holds a long spear in his left hand. In his right hand is seen a bunch of flowers of fruits with which he feeds the peacock. The bodily ornaments consist of a *triśikhāṇḍa* headdress, prominent earrings, and a *baghanak* torque, a girdle, etc.

On either side of the slab there appear in the upper portion the standing figures of Brahmā and Śiva. Polycephalous Brahmā on left and Śiva on right are shown with matted locks, four arms and carrying their own characteristic attributes. They hold two water-jars and are anointing the god Kārttikeya by pouring sacred water mixed with flowers on his head. The other sculpture depicting the myth of Skanda-*Abhiṣeka* comes from Mathurā and has been described earlier<sup>4</sup>. These two form a class of their own and their representation is corroborated by a passage in the *Linga Purāṇa* already cited.

*Skanda as teacher :*

An image (ht. 22'') of Kārttikeya in the Baijnāth Museum is of unique importance as it represents the god with a book (Pl. XXII). Though literary references are not wanting as regards this aspect of Skanda,<sup>5</sup> his portrayal in nor-

<sup>1</sup> *Chronology of Gujarat*, p. 205.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 276.

<sup>3</sup> K. M. Munshi, *Saga of Indian Sculpture* (Bombay, 1957), pl. 42.

<sup>4</sup> *Supra*, pp. 81-2.

<sup>5</sup> *Supra*, pp. 12-14, 36, 71-2, 81-2.



thern Indian iconography as carrying a book is, however, noticed for the first time in this specimen. The sculpture can be dated safely to the 9th-10th century, if not earlier.

The figure has four arms showing a unique combination of four attributes in his hands, viz., a Śakti, a stylised lotus bud, a manuscript and a *mātulūṅga* (long lemon) fruit respectively beginning from his right in a clockwise manner. The god rides on his mount peacock which is shown under him with its beak pecking at the fruit held by the god in his lower left hand. The decorations of the bird's wing are minutely detailed by the sculptor though highly designed and stylised. On either side of the stela above the image are seen two *vidyādhara* couples carrying garlands as the offering.

It is noteworthy that the hair of the god is arranged in piled up raised *jaṭā-jūṭa* with several locks falling on either side on to the shoulders. There are affixed two *aśoka* leave-spikes to the hair near the ears in which circular discs are worn. Apart from the thick torque of exquisite design and double-stringed bead necklace (*muktā-hāra*) there is significant "cross" mark (or basic *svastika*) on the chest. It is again an outstanding trait seen in this image. Round the stout left arm is tied a double *keyūra* and on the wrists are worn bracelets. The ornate girdle encircling the waist is seen on the right thigh while fringe of the undergarment is depicted like a *yogapaṭṭa* band on either leg. The oval symbol held in the upper right hand is to be identified as a lotus bud of stylised design or a vessel of that shape: a feature new to his early iconography.

This icon can be named as the "Skanda-Sanat Kumāra" aspect of the god, with the especial attributes of a teacher, viz., a scripture, a lotus bud-shaped vessel, matted locks and a mark on the chest.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Shri R. C. Agrawal kindly informs of another recently acquired Skanda icon with a book (standing, ht. 48 cms., National Museum No. 67. 114, from Madhya Pradesh, c. 8-9th cent.). Two other medieval figures with this attribute are seen by him in the Gwalior Museum. His article on them is under print with Dr U.P. Shah of Baroda.



## DESCRIPTION OF PLATES

*Plate I*

a—e. Showing a group of five representative coins of the punchmarked variety. On them will be seen some crude human figure occurring singly, or in a pair, or a group of three with indistinct features. However, the one human representation with a staff-like object is interesting. For other useful considerations, see pp. 38-9, and Textfigs. 1, 2. From the British Museum Collection.

*Plate II*

a—c. Illustrating obverse of three early tribal coins from Ujjain, with a standing figure holding a staff and a purse (or vase, or shield ?)-like object. Invariably clad in warrior's dress and a peculiar crest, perhaps helmet. All specimens come from Ujjayinī Class 2, varieties f and g of Allan's classification. See p. 39, and Textfigs. 3-6. From the British Museum Collection.

d—f. Showing obverse of three representative Yaudheya coins with the Standing figure of God Śkanda-Kārttikeya. The two-armed god holds a long Śakti (spear) in his right hand while the left rests on the hip. A cock is seen by his left side near the feet as his favourite emblem. With clear Brāhmī legend. See p. 40. From the British Museum Collection.

*Plate III*

Showing full view of the carved side of the Lālā Bhagat Column. Photo : Arch. Survey of India (ASI).

*Plate IV*

a. Detail of the lower portion of the relief. Lālā Bhagat Column. ASI.

b. Side view of the Cock figure. It once surmounted the column in the nature of a Kukkuṭa-Dhvaja sacred to Skanda-Kārttikeya. ASI.

*Plate V*

Upper portion from the detail of the Kukkuṭa-Dhvaja relief. ASI.

*Plate VI*

Middle portion from the detail of the Kukkuṭa-Dhvaja relief. ASI.



## Plate III—VI

At the village site of Lālā Bhagat, near Kanpur<sup>1</sup>, discovery of this sandstone column was made in 1927, by R.B. Shri Prayag Dayal the then Curator of the Provincial (now State) Museum, Lucknow. The octagonal pillar carved on one of its sides from top to bottom adds a new chapter to the study of Indian art and mythology. It presents a valuable document of iconography with several of the motifs elaborated on it in relief for the first time. It provides "a sculptural commentary" on a number of problems regarding the evolution of religious forms and iconography of several Hindu divinities, namely Sūrya, Gaja-Lakṣmī and Śkanda-Kārttikeya. It has been assigned a date about the beginning of Christian era. This period saw a stage in the process of formulating iconographic forms of different gods and goddesses. It was accomplished by way of incorporating diverse ideas and motifs as we see documented on this pillar in the grouping of several motifs and traits in the mythology of Skanda-Kārttikeya to whom the cock-capitalled Dhvaja was sacred and dedicated. The Lālā Bhagat pillar with the fragmentary sculpture of a cock, which appears to have once surmounted it, is to be identified with the Kukkuṭa Dhvaja or cock-topped votive column raised in honour of Skanda. An actual representation of it occurs on the stone shaft itself carved in low relief. With details of its carving, the pillar raises some interesting problems bearing upon the mythological personality of Skanda in the Kuṣāṇa period. It also acquaints us with the early representations of such divinities as Sūrya and Lakṣmī whose images have been incorporated on it. On the testimony of the short epigraph engraved on one of the octagonal sides

<sup>1</sup> Lālā Bhagat is a small village in the extreme north of Tahsil Derapur, Dist. Kanpur, U.P. and owes its present name to a Thākur who was called Lālā Bhagat because of his devotion. It was found by the discoverer installed inside a domed chamber by the side of a large mound in the above village. Not far away from the site of the red sandstone shaft, the detached capital of same stone carved in the form of the figure of a cock in round was seen which was rightly thought to form the adjunct capital of the pillar.

From the brief notice of it that appeared in the *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India* for the year 1928, one would believe that the pillar with its capital etc. was removed from the site to the Lucknow Museum. There should hardly be any doubt that it was not done as reported. As a natural corollary it must be now under the custody of that museum. But, by some unknown reason, it was never removed from its original site and it still remains there in the village where its discoverer first saw it. Scholars have, however, committed the mistake on the authority of the ASR. of assigning its present whereabouts to the Lucknow Museum (e.g. C. Sivaramamurti, *Art and Literature as Mirrors of Indian Culture*, pl. XVII, 52).



of the column which reads "*Kumāra-varasa*", there remains hardly any doubt that the pillar with surmounted cock-capital was dedicated to Kumāra or Skanda-Kārttikeya.

Erection of such dedicatory pillars in honour of the god evinces the existence of an independent and separate Kumāra cult as early as the first century B.C. This fact is fully corroborated by the evidence available from tribal coins of such republican states as the Yaudheyas (see Pl. V), Audumbaras and the Kuṇindas who were devout followers of Kumāra-Kārttikeya. On the basis of available facts it is believed, they had even consecrated their kingdom in the name of Skanda who was presumably their temporal as well as spiritual lord (see p. 42).

Moreover, as already discussed (see p. 28) carvings on the pillar offer a most attractive representation of the mythological beliefs, known from literature, in their plastic rendering in a manner which was not only easily understood but might have apparently enlightened the onlooker-devotee about the mystery of the god whose eclectic personality and associations were still curious in their diverse definition. From its details the pillar acquaints us with a stage in the expansion of the worship of *Kumāravara* who had evolved from the position of a low-graded native divinity to the status of a high-ranking god in the pantheon. The success achieved by the sculptor in outlining so clearly a number of mythical details through the language of art-symbols is not only remarkable but even unparalleled in this period.

The pillar measures 6' 3" in ht. Its bottom shows an *ardhacandra* design above which it is octagonal, with sides alternately 7" and 6" in width. One of the sides measuring seven inches is exquisitely carved in low relief almost throughout from top to bottom, as will be seen on pl. III. In this fine sculpture we have, as it were, a running frieze from top to bottom conceived vertically, as the space was available to the sculptor; and presumably representing a complete 'story' in several scenes of elaborate significance.

On one of the six inches side of the octagon, to the left of the carved side, a short epigraph is engraved in early Brāhmī characters. It reads:

*Kumāra-V[a]rasa.*<sup>1</sup>

Not only this label of six letters furnishes a palaeographical clue to the date but also informs us about the dedication of the Dhavja to *Kumāravara*, a

<sup>1</sup> Prayag Dayal:—*vīrasa*.



name of Skanda used several times in the *Mahābhārata* describing the earliest version of the Birth-story of Skanda (p.28). The inscription should be assigned on the palaeographic grounds a date round about the beginning of Christian era and that is also agreeable from the style of sculpture.

For convenience's sake it has been illustrated here on several plates (III-VI); the full detail from top to bottom is reproduced on pl. III indicating the unified theme of the relief.

First, from the top, are carved the figures of two *hamsa* birds with their visible wings in flying attitude. Between them appears some cylindrical object tied to a pole undoubtedly being carried by the geese on their shoulder. They do not hold the staff by their beaks, as we find narrated in the story of the geese transporting through sky some object or a turtle secured to a stick. In a similar manner, as we see here, an aerial car is shown being borne by *hamsas* on a contemporary Torāṇa-architrave from Mathurā (J555).

Next is the figure of the Sun god riding in a chariot drawn by four horses. The god himself is shown driving the car. By his left side stands a female attendant holding a long parasol over his head, and the female attendant on his right probably bears a *chaurī*. It is curious that under the hoofs of the horses there is depicted a dreadful head, representing presumably the demon of darkness. In front of the chariot are seen two prominent female figures and another woman between them in the background. Usually they are regarded as the figures of Ūṣā and Pratyūṣā on either side and of Chāyā in the centre. Several remarkable features of Sūrya's iconography are noteworthy in this depiction, as it is one of the earliest representations of the Sun god with such evolved iconography.

The figure is conceived frontally. It is an especially noted feature in the case of riding Sūrya image in the Śuṅga and Kuṣāṇa periods; e.g., at Bodhgayā, Mathurā and in a Gandhāra sculpture. While in the Bodhgayā relief Ūṣā and Pratyūṣā are shown on the car itself shooting arrows against the darkness, here they are conceived as heralding the advent of Sūrya's car; and the destruction of darkness is expressed through another motif showing the human headed demon of darkness being crushed under the feet of horses. Typical is also the posture of the galloping horses conceived frontally. In the early period, they are always shown in rampage and facing to the side directions, as in the present sculpture, and in all other Bodhgayā, Gandhāra and Mathurā representations (see Coomaraswamy, *Indian and Indonesian Art*, pls. 61, 103).



## DESCRIPTION OF PLATES

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Next to it appears a group of thirteen dwarfish figures moving in two rows. They are altogether nude and with protuberant belly, long faces and disproportionate stature create an hideous pattern. Their grotesque features showing squat legs, irregular arms and distorted appearance do not allow their identification as normal beings, or sages. Such deformed persons with bellicose looks are not unknown in early Indian art, they appear in the retinue of Māra the Evil One assaulting against the Buddha, or the frolicsome *gaṇa* hosts of Śiva. Or, they also occur on Stūpa railings and temple structures as occupying the empty spaces with their curious shapes and erratic postures.

These dwarfish figures were identified by Prayag Dayal as the Vālakhilya sages who according to the *Bhāgavata Puārṇa* are of infinitely short stature and offer praises in honour of the Sun god and herald his car at the dawn. However, we have reasons to disagree with this view, and in the light of the story of Skanda's birth found in the *Mahābhārata*, they appear to represent the *graha* or demonic hosts of Skanda.

Immediately below, figures a peacock dancing with its outspread wings and fan-tail. The sculptor has remarkably captured the ecstatic mood of the bird. It looks to the right with its raised neck. As the bird is seen in the frontal perspective, its body, side wings and dispersed plumage are carved in depth backing each other. The *ardhacandra* designs of its plumage are carved finely to the minutest detail. Similar exquisitely carved figures of this bird are found on the Stūpa-railings of Bharhut and Sanchi (Stūpa III).

Next to it is the figure of a mighty elephant seen disporting in a pond of lotuses. Moving to left, crushing upon the rich lotus foliage, it has plucked a lotus creeper by the trunk, and appears to be in the challenging mood. Apparently it is not the tamed animal but an untethered beast gamboling at free will. After a blank space of about eleven inches, there occurs the last and the lowest scene on the pillar. To the right is carved Gaja-Lakṣmī whose consecration is being done by the two elephants one on either side with water-vessels held in their trunk. She stands in a majestic posture with her right hand raised in *abhaya mudrā* in the direction of a pillar illustrated opposite to her. The pillar shown in relief is surmounted by a cock figure and its base shows a corpulent atlantes-dwarf with raised hands. The goddess is richly dressed and adorned with ornaments. In her figure, 'the modelling and the muscular delineation in the umbilical region are very delicate and graceful' and easily remind for comparison such effeminate Yakṣī figures as that from Didārganj, or on Mathurā railing pillars.



Her portrayal as Gaja-Lakṣmī is known in early Indian art at Bharhut, Sanchi, Mathurā, Udaigiri, Bodhgayā, Pītalkhorā and on certain series of the tribal coinage.

*Stone Figure of the Cock* (Pl. IV b): A red sandstone figure of a cock carved in the round was found about 8 ft. away from the column. It formed part namely capital of the octagon was indicated from the mortice between the legs of the bird. Furthermore, this supposition is strengthened from the illustration of the Cock-Dhvaja in the last scene of the carving. It offers a definite clue to the position of the detached cock figure on the top of the pillar. It was dedicated to Skanda-Kumāra is clear from the inscription reading *Kumāravarasa*. A Cock Standard (Kukkuṭa-Dhvaja) sacred to Skanda is often mentioned in literature and its similar portrayal is seen on Kuṣāna coins.

The various scenes carved on the octagon appear to convey no united meaning unless interpreted in the light of the *Mahābhārata* evidence. It is certain, that the purport of the scenes was an easily understood one. The legend told through several symbolic narrations appears to have been known popularly to the masses. A part of the story of Skanda related in the *Mahābhārata* can be identified here with fare certainty. The mythical story of the god illustrated on the pillar was indeed as apparent as a common Jātaka tale to the people. For relevant identification of the legend as depicted on the pillar and narrated in the *Mahābhārata*, see pp. 28, 45-6.

### Plate VII

Earliest dated stone image of Skanda with his full-fledged iconography. See pp. 46-47. Inscribed with a three-line inscription on the pedestal referring to Sam. 11 (presumably Śaka, corresponding to A.D. 89). Mathurā Museum. ASI.

### Plate VIII

Kārttikeya with spear and *abhayamudrā*. Kuṣāṇa. See p. 82.

- a. National Museum. Photo: National Museum.
- b. Mathurā Museum. ASI.

### Plate IX

- a-b. Deity with spear (?). Probably Skanda with *abhaya* and Śakti.
- C. 2nd-3rd cent. A.D. Mathurā Museum. ASI. See pp. 47, 82.



## Plate X

a. Early Kuṣāṇa relief showing Seven Divine Mothers. To the extreme left a flanking figure of Kārttikeya stands in his usual posture with a spear and *abhayamudrā*. Mathurā Museum. ASI. See p. 48.

b. Late Kuṣāṇa relief with seated Mātṛkā figures flanked by standing Kārttikeya on extreme left. Mathurā Museum. See p. 48.

## Plate XI

a-b. Obverse and reverse sides of a sculptured Kuṣāṇa slab from Mathurā. Showing Worship of Bhagavān Nemesa. Lucknow Museum, No. J 626. Inscribed.

It was excavated at the Kaṅkālī Ṭilā Mound, Mathurā (Smith, *The Jain Stūpa and other antiquities at Mathurā*, Allahabad, 1901, pl. 22). It should be designated as the NAIGAMEṢA PAṬA properly as it bears an inscription reading *Bhagavā Nemeso*. The Kaṅkālī Ṭilā being the ancient Jaina site it is presumable that the divine lord Nemesa of the panel was a deity worshiped popularly by the Jaina community of Mathurā in the Kuṣāṇa period. The reliefs on the two sides of the panel are to be dated safely both from artistic and palaeographic considerations to the early Kuṣāṇa period. Dr Bühler rightly identified the deity with Negameṣī-Naigameṣa of the *Nemināthacarita* (7th cent.) and Hariṇegamesī of the *Kalpasūtra* (Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XXII, p. 223ff.). He quoted from both the above texts wherein the iconography of the deity is featured by a goat's or deer's head. He further pointed out in his learned way that the scene, depicted on the Kaṅkālī Ṭilā panel might well represent the most famous legend of the exchange of the embryos of Devanandā and Triśalā by the god Hariṇegamesī at the command of Indra, as described in the *Kalpasūtra*. The story is thus found in the *Kalpasūtra*:—"When Indra became aware that Mahāvīra had taken the form of an embryo in the Brāhmaṇī Devanandā's body, he paid his reverence to the Arhat that was to be born. It then occurred to him that an Arhat ought not to be born in a low Brāhmanical family, but only in a noble royal race, and that it was and always had been the duty of the reigning Indra to transfer the embryo, in case through the influence of his Karma an Arhat had descended into the body of a female of the Brāhmaṇa caste. In order to fulfil this duty, Indra directed Hariṇegamesī, the divine commander of infantry, to transfer Mahāvīra from the body of Devanandā to Triśalā, a lady of the Jñātr family of Kṣatriyas who was also with



child. Hariṇegameśī then repaired first to the Brāhmanical quarter of Kuṇḍa-grāma, took Mahāvīrā from Devanandā, cleansing him from all impurity, and carried him carefully in his folded hands to the Kṣatriya quarter of the same town. There he took Triśalā's embryo from her, likewise duly cleansing it, and put Mahāvira in its place. Next, he returned to Devanandā and placed Triśalā's child in her body. During these operations the two ladies and their attendants lay in a deep magic sleep. Finally, the deity returned to Indra's abode and reported to him that his orders had been carried out".

Naigameśa was a deity worshipped and propitiated for granting progeny is evident from the *Nemināthacarita* (VII. 8-14) wherein a story is narrated from the life of Kṛṣṇa stating how he invoked the favour of the goat-faced god to obtain for Satyabhāmā a son equal to Pradyumna in luck and auspicious qualities. The story is given as follows :—

"Annoyed at the great luck of Pradyumna and his fame, Bhāmā went into her boudoir and lay down on a broken cot. (8)

"The foe of Kāṁsa visited her there and spoke agitatedly: 'Who has shown disrespect to thee, whereby, O fair-browed one, thou art thus afflicted?' (9)

"Bhāmā answered : 'No disrespect has been shown to me ; but if I do not obtain a son equal to Pradyumna, I shall certainly die'. (10)

"Knowing her tenacity of purpose, Kṛṣṇa undertook a fast in honour of the god NAIGAMEŚIN, partaking only of every eighth meal. (11)

"NAIGAMEŚIN appeared and spoke to him : 'What can I do for thee?' Kṛṣṇa answered : 'Give to Bhāmā a son who resembles Pradyumna.' (12)

"NAIGAMEŚIN replied : 'Make her, whom thou desirest to have a son, put on this necklace, and then have intercourse with her ; thereby she will obtain the desired son.' (13)

"Handing over the necklace, which he wore, NAIGAMEŚIN disappeared. But Vāsudeva joyfully gave the precious ornament to Satyā."

As has been pointed out by Dr V. S. Agrawala, "Two facts emerge out of this story, firstly that the Jainas knew of a god whom they sought to propitiate for obtaining the blessings of child-birth and good luck. The second peculiarity suggested in the story quoted above is of iconographic importance



in that it lays down a conspicuous necklace to be the distinguishing mark of this god. This feature can be traced in all the images of this deity whether representing its male or female aspects. Even where the entire figure is devoid of ornaments, as in the delicately finished figures E 2 and E 3 of the Mathurā Museum, the large necklace (*hāra*), a variety of torque (*grāiveyaka*) is an invariable feature of decoration." ("The Presiding Deity of Child-birth amongst the Jainas" *Jaina Antiquary*, Vol. II, No. IV, 1937, p. 78).

Once the goat-headed deity, i.e., the divine Nemesa, of the Jaina sculpture from Kaṅkāli Tīlā is recognised as the son-granting and embryo-exchanging Naigameṣa-Naigameṣin-Hariṇegameṣī (the last one meaning, according to the *Nemināthacarita* commentary, 'Negameṣī of Hari') of Jaina mythology, there remains no doubt that the *Chāgavaktra bāla-graha* Naigameya-Naigameṣa-Nejameṣa of Brāhmanical tradition is identical. (See also *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. II, p. 316). They only reflect emphasis on the two opposite aspects of the same divinity which was conceived both as beneficent and as hurtful or destructive. (*Ibid.*) In the *Mahābhārata* and the *Āyurveda Saṁhitās* Naigameya is very closely associated with Skanda; he is declared to be either Skanda's son, companion, another form, or even identical to him. Presumably, the worship of Naigameya as the genius of child-birth and child-affliction formed part of Skanda-Kārttikeya cult and who latter had come to preside over all such fertility divinities by this period. See further pp. 50-5. (Photo : ASI).

### Plate XII

a. Standing haloed statuette of Kārttikeya, only 5" in ht. ; in the right hand is held a fullsize Śakti while the left akimbo shows a cock figure grasped by the god as his favourite bird. Earlier to the iconographic stage represented by this very late Kuṣāṇa image the bird was just shown near the feet of the deity, as on some of the Yaudheya coins, and its figure topped the column dedicated to Skanda as for example the Lālā Bhagat pillar. The bird held in the hand is to be noticed for the first time in this interesting sculpture.

However, it should be mentioned here that the cock is never shown as the vehicle of the god and for that no literary reference is there. It was only later that a *vāhana* of the god was added in the form of the peacock when in the Gupta period both art and literature have numerous instances of the *mayūra-prsthāśraya* iconography. Even then the cock continues as the pet bird of the god and is shown held in one of his hands, usually the left ; see pl. XIX a, XX b and c ; pp. 51-2. ASI.



b. Goat-headed male god Naigameṣa. Partly damaged statuette, ht. 1 ft 3 in. Two children will be seen held in his left hand and hanging down about his thigh. On each of his shoulders legs of figures are traceable indicating representation of missing boys. The prominent triangular necklace would form his other iconographic peculiarity. It is said to have come from Kanikālī Tīlā. Mathurā Museum, No. E 1. See pp. 51-2. ASI.

c. Goat-faced god Naigameṣa showing *abhayamudrā* in his right hand. Four children are borne on his shoulders, two on each side. Kuṣāṇa red sandstone image, 1 ft 5 in. in ht. Mathurā Museum, No. 2547. See pp. 51-2. ASI.

d. Negameṣī or the goat-headed female counterpart of Naigameṣa. As the presiding goddess of fertility and children her prominent breasts and the necklace are to be noted. She appears as seated against some peculiar seat and on her knees holds a pillow (or basket) on which a boy is lying with its hands in *añjalimudrā*. The right hand of the goddess is broken, but seems to have been held in *abhayamudrā*. Mathurā Museum, No. E 2. ASI. See pp. 51-2.

### Plate XIII

Socalled Pañcika and Hārītī with children. Gandhāra, Kuṣāṇa period. Now in the Peshawar Museum. See pp. 47-8.

### Plate XIV

Divinity of Child-birth and war affiliations. Instead of the spear, a *triśūla* is held in her regular right hand. In the other three hands of this four-armed figure, a vessel and a cup are seen besides a child in her lower right hand. Gandhāra, Kuṣāṇa period. Peshawar Museum. See p. 48.

### Plate XV

Goddess of Children. Gandhāra, 2nd cent. AD. Lahore Museum. See p. 48.

### Plate XVI

Abhiṣeka of Skanda to the office of generalissimo by fourheaded Brahmā and Śiva. Gupta period. Mathurā Museum, No. 466. ASI. See pp. 81-2.

### Plate XVII

a. Kumāra-Kārttikeya, with Śakti and riding on his vehicle peacock. Partly damaged. Terracotta. Early Gupta period. Mathurā Museum, No. 2794. ASI. See pp. 80-1.



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b. Śaktidhara Kārttikeya borne on his peacock vehicle. Stone image, Gupta period. Bhārat Kalā Bhavan, Banaras Hindu University. See p. 83.

## Plate XVIII

a. Skanda-Abhiṣeka. From Kanauj. C. 7-8th Cent., p. 89.

b. Pañcika-Kubera (?) as War-god. Kuṣāṇa, Gandhāra. He bears a spear and by his side near the knee and feet are shown children, standing and seated. His nature as identical to the double aspect of Skanda as divinity of war as well as progeny would tend to render his identification as Pañcika or Kubera unlikely. See pp. 47-8.

## Plate XIX

a. Standing Warrior God. With a spear in his right and a cock figure in his left hand. Identified as Kārttikeya. Kafir-kot, Gandhāra. C. 500 A.D. Now in the British Museum. See p. 84.

b. Seated Kārttikeya on his peacock vehicle. With Śakti and *abhaya-mudrā* in the two hands. From Shāhābād, c. 6 th cent. A.D. Now in the Patna Museum. ASI. See. p. 83.

## Plate XX

a. Kaumārī. Medieval- period. Mathurā Museum. ASI. See p. 88.

b. Standing Skanda. From Sāmālājī, north Gujarat. C. 7th-8th cent. ASI. See p. 87.

c. Broken image of Standing Kārttikeya. From Baroda. ASI. See p. 87.

## Plate XXI

Skanda-Kārttikeya. Stone figure from Basar (Kulsārī), Garhwal. Its photograph is here reproduced through the kind courtesy of Śrī Svāmī Pranavanandaji Mahārāja F.R.G.S. (of the Holy Kailās and Manasarovar). It is one of the characteristic and fully enlightened image slab of the 8th-9th century. Remarkable in its composition of several subsidiary figures around the seated adolescent god, it represents a perfect *dhyāna* of Skanda meditated upon by his votaries in northern India, and particularly in the hill area from where it comes.



On a projected pedestal, the god is shown poised on his mount peacock in the *lalita āsana* with his right leg resting free on the ground. Besides a closely fitted lower garment, his upper body is bare excepting the ornaments. He wears thick bracelets and elaborate triangular *keyūra* (armlets), a prominent torque and a multiple stringed bead-garland (*muktā-hāra*) which hangs loosely from the neck. Below it there is in the suspending part an interesting motif of a pair of alligator's heads (?).

The *Kuṇḍalas* worn in the ears show a peculiar feature of a discoid design with spiral motif. There is a coronet seen above the forehead and the *triśi-khaṇḍa* headdress characteristic of the Kārttikeya iconography is exquisitely formed in three long twisted locks falling to the shoulders. Behind his head the large halo of circular shape is in fact of the nature of true *padma-prabhā-maṇḍala* (louts halo) with the outer design of lotus petals. In spite of slight damages, the charming adolescent face of the deity is characteristic of his mysterious serenity as the divine lord Guha.

In his right hand he holds a weapon which is not a usual spear or javelin but a different type, rather a true Śakti shaped like a thin mace with pointed blade. Unlike the largesized spear of earlier and other images of Kārttikeya as if resting against his body by its own weight, it is held, in this specimen conveniently by the god above the shoulder. On his left hand the god has a cock as his emblematic bird, that again is seen here perched in a happy manner as compared to other examples showing it grasped tightly in the fist of the deity. To his right below is a small female figure who may be identified as (?) Devasenā, his consort or a supplicating devotee. She is an equally charming figure, wearing profuse ornaments and standing with her knees bent on the ground and hands folded in *añjali mudrā* of perfect adoration.

### Plate XXII

Seated Skanda-Kārttikeya with a book. Now in the Baijnath Museum. Photo through the courtesy as above pl. XXI.



# APPENDIX I

## (SCRIPTURE OF ṢAṢṬHĪ)

षष्ठीकल्प

[MĀNAVA GRHYASŪTRA II. 13]

अथातः षष्ठीकल्पं व्याख्यास्यामः ॥१॥ शुक्लपक्षस्य पञ्चम्यां प्रत्यङ्मुखो हविष्यमन्नमश्नीत ॥२॥ अघः शयीत दर्भेषु शालिपलालेषु वा प्राक्शिरा ब्रह्मचारी ॥३॥ श्वोभूत उदित आदित्ये स्नानं पानं भोजनमनुलेपनं स्रजो वासांसि न प्रत्याचक्षीत ॥४॥ यात्रदद्यात्तावदश्नीयात् । यद्यदद्यात्तत्तदश्नीयादन्यत्रामेध्यपातकिम्योऽभिनविष्टवर्जम् ॥५॥ अस्तमित आदित्ये पयसि स्थालीपाकं श्रपयित्वा । अथेतर्नामवेयं जुहोति—

धनदां वसुमीशानां कामदां सर्वकामिनाम् ।

पुण्यां यशस्विनीं देवीं षष्ठीं शक्र जुषस्व मे ॥a॥

नन्दी भूतिश्च लक्ष्मीश्च आदित्या च यशस्विनी ।

सुमना वाक्च सिद्धिश्च षष्ठी मे दिशतां धनम् ॥b॥

पुत्रान्पशून्धनं धान्यं बह्वृचाजगवेडकम् ।

मनसा यत्प्रणीतं च तन्मे दिशतु हव्यभुक् ॥c॥

कामप्रदां रजनीं विश्वरूपां षष्ठीमुपवर्ततु मे धनम् ।

सा मे कामा कामपत्नी षष्ठी मे दिशतां धनम् ॥d॥

आकृतिः प्रकृतिर्वचनी धावनिः पद्मचारिणी मन्मता भव स्वाहा ॥e॥

गन्धद्वारां दुराधर्षां नित्यपुष्टां करीषिणीम् ।

ईश्वरीं सर्वभूतानां तामिहोपह्वये श्रियम् ॥f॥

नानापत्रका सा देवी पुष्टिश्चातिसरस्वती ।

अरिं देवीं प्रपद्येयमुपवर्तयतु मे धनम् ॥g॥

हिरण्यप्राकारा देवि मां वर ।

आगच्छत्वायुर्यशश्च स्वाहा ॥h॥

अश्वपूर्णां रथमध्यां हस्तिनादप्रमोदिनीम् ।

श्रियं देवीमुपह्वये श्रीर्मा देवी जुषताम् ॥i॥

उपयन्तु मां देवगणास्त्वागाश्च तपसा सह ।

प्रादुर्भूतोऽस्मि राष्ट्रेऽस्मिन् श्रीः श्रद्धां दधातु मे ॥k॥

श्रियै स्वाहा । ह्रियै स्वाहा । लक्ष्म्यै स्वाहा । उपलक्ष्म्यै स्वाहा । नन्दायै स्वाहा । हरिद्रायै स्वाहा । षष्ठ्यै स्वाहा । समृद्ध्यै स्वाहा । जयायै स्वाहा । कामायै स्वाहेति ॥६॥ जयप्रभृति समानम् ॥७॥ षण्मासान्प्रयुञ्जीत । त्रीन्वोभयतः पक्षान् ॥८॥ शतसाहस्रसंयोग एकवरो वा ॥९॥ गौरनड्वांश्च दक्षिणा ॥१०॥

[Mānava G. S., pp. 53-4, ed. Dr. Friedrich Knauer, St Petersburg, 1897 ; pp. 76-78, ed. of Śrī Bhīmasena Śarmā, Itāwā with Hindi Translation.]



## APPENDIX II

## SKANDA-YĀGAḤ OR DHŪRTAKALPAḤ

## (ATHARVA-PARIŚIṢṬA XX.)

(RITUAL OF A CEREMONY IN HONOUR OF SKANDA)

EDITED BY GOODWIN, JAOS., XV. P. V FF.

(१)

१—अथाज्ञौ घूर्तकल्पं व्याख्यास्यामः ।

२—चतुर्षु चतुर्षु मासेषु फाल्गुणाऽऽषाढकातिकपूर्वपक्षेषु नित्यं कुर्वीत ॥

३—इवो भूते षष्ठ्यामुपवासं कृत्वा, प्रागुदीचीं दिशं निष्क्रम्य, शुचौ दिशे मनोहरे नो 'परे मण्डलं त्रयोदशा-  
ऽरतिं कृत्वा, मध्ये मण्डपस्य, सर्ववानस्पत्यां मालां कृत्वा, घण्टा-पताकास्रजः प्रतिसरं च मालापृष्ठे कृत्वा,  
मध्ये दर्पणांश्चोऽपकल्पयित्वा, तत्र यं वहन्ति हव्या श्वेत्वा इत्यावाहयेत् ॥१॥

(२)

१—यं वहन्ति हयाः श्वेता नित्ययुक्ता मनोजवाः ।

तमहं श्वेतसंनाहं धूर्तमावाहयाम्यहम् ॥

२—यं वहन्ति गजाः सिंहा व्याघ्राश्चाऽपि विषाणिनः ।

तमहं सिंहसंनाहं धूर्तमावाहयाम्यहम् ॥

३—यं वहन्ति मयूराश्च चित्रपक्षा विहंगमा ।

तमहं चित्रसंनाहं धूर्तमावाहयाम्यहम् ॥

४—यं वहन्ति सर्ववर्णाः सदायुक्ता मनोजवा ।

तमहं सर्वसंनाहं धूर्तमावाहयाम्यहम् ॥

५—यस्याऽमोघा सदा शक्ति नित्यं घण्टापताकिनी ।

तमहं शक्तिसंनाहं धूर्तमावाहयाम्यहम् ॥

६—यश्च मातृगणै नित्यं सदा परिवृतो युवा ।

तमहं मातृभिः सार्द्धं धूर्तमावाहयाम्यहम् ॥

७—यश्च कन्यासहस्रेण सदा परिवृतो महान् ।

तमहं मातृभिः सार्द्धं धूर्तमावाहयाम्यहम् ॥

८—आयातु देवः सगणः ससैन्यः

सवाहनः साऽनुचरः प्रतीतः ।

पठाननोऽष्टादशलोचनश्च

सुवर्णवर्णो लघुपूर्णमासः ।



९—आयातु देवो मम कार्तिकेयो  
ब्रह्मण्यपित्रै सह मातृभिश्च ॥  
भ्रात्रा विशाखेन च विश्वरूप  
इमं बलिं साज्नुचरः जुषस्व ॥

१०—संविशस्वेऽति संवेशयेत् ॥२॥

(३)

१—संविशस्व वरघण्टाऽऽसरःस्तवे  
यत्र सुभुजो हि निर्मितः ।  
संविष्टो मे धेहि दीर्घमायुः  
प्रजां पशूँश्चैव विनायकेन ॥

२—इमा आप इति गन्धोदकं पाद्यं दद्यात् ॥

प्रतिगृह्णातु भगवान् देवो धूर्त इति ॥

पट्चैव हिरण्यवर्णा इतीमे दिव्यो गन्धर्व इति गन्धान् यस्ते गन्ध इति चेमाः सुमनस इति सुमनसः ॥  
प्रियं धातुरितिः... ।

३—वनस्पतिरसो मेध्य इति धूपम् ॥ यद्येण ते दिवा  
अग्निः शुक्रश्चेति दीपम् ॥ ये विश्वतः सुप्रतीक इति पर्णानि ॥

४—प्रक्षाल्य हविष्युपसादये दध्योदनं क्षीरोदनं गुडोदनं मुद्गपायसमिश्रधान्यमोदकानि सर्वगन्धान् सर्वरसानुदक-  
पूर्वं मूलपूर्णं पुष्पपूर्णं फलपूर्णं रसपूर्णं चापकल्पयित्वा ॥

५—इन्द्रः सीतामिष्युल्लिख्याग्ने प्रेहीत्यग्निं प्रणीय, प्रज्वालय, प्राञ्चमिथ्यमुपसमाधाय भग एतमिथ्यामिति  
विसृमि, रेतमिथ्यं सुगार्हपत्य इत्युपसमाधाय, समिद्धो अग्निरिति समिद्धमनुमन्त्रयते ॥३॥

(४)

१—भद्रमिच्छन्तो हिरण्यगर्भो भगान्ने वर्चस्त्वया मन्यो यस्ते मन्यो यद् देवा देव हेडनमिति षट्, कामसूक्ताऽ-  
“दयो दश, महीपतये स्वाहा” ॥

२—धूर्ताय स्कन्दाय विशाखाय पिनाकसेनाय भ्रातृस्त्रीकामाय स्वच्छन्दाय वरघण्टाय निर्मिलाय लोहितगात्राय  
शालकटंकटाय स्वाहेति हुत्वा, अग्नये प्रजापतये ये देवा दिव्येकादशस्थेत्यनुमतयेऽग्नये सिवष्टकृत इति च ॥४॥

(५)

१—शिवाग्निकृत्तिकानां तु स्तोष्यामि वरदं शुभम् ।  
स मे स्तुतो विश्वरूपः सर्वानर्थान्प्रयच्छतु ॥

२—धनधान्यकुलान् भोगान् स मे वचनवेदनम् ।  
दासीदासं तथा स्थानं मणिरत्नं सुरान्जनम् ॥

३—ये भक्त्या भजने धूर्तं ब्रह्मण्यं च यशस्विनम् ।  
सर्वे ते धनवन्तः स्युः प्रजावन्तो यशस्विनः ॥

४—यथेन्द्रस्तु वरान्लब्ध्वा प्रीतस्तु भगवान् पुरा ।  
देहि मे विपुलान्भोगान् भक्तानां च विशेषत इति ॥



- ५—कामसूक्तेनोपहारमुपहरेत् ॥  
 ६—उपहारमिमं देव मया भक्त्या निवेदितम् ।  
 प्रतिगृह्य यथान्यायमकुदः सुमना भव ॥५॥

(६)

- १—सद्योजातं प्रपद्यामि सद्योजाताय वै नमः ।  
 भवे-भवेनाऽदिभवे भजस्व मां भवोऽद्भवेति भवाय नमः ॥  
 २—देवं प्रपद्ये वरदं प्रपद्ये स्कन्दं प्रपद्ये च कुमारमुग्रम् ।  
 षण्णां सुतः, कृत्तिकानां षडास्यमग्नेः पुत्रं साधनं गोपथोक्तैः ॥  
 ३—रक्तानि यस्य पुष्पाणि रक्तं यस्य विलेपनम् ।  
 कुक्कुटा यस्य रक्ताक्षाः स मे स्कन्दः प्रसीदतु ॥  
 ४—आग्नेयं कृत्तिका पुत्रमैन्द्रं केचिदधीयते ।  
 केचित्पाशुपतं रौद्रं योऽसि सोऽसि नमोऽस्तु त इति ॥  
 ५—स्वामिने नमः शंकरायग्निपुत्राय कृत्तिकापुत्राय नमः ॥  
 ६—भगवान् क्वचिदप्रतिरूपः स्वाहा भगवान् क्वचिद् अप्रतिरूपः ॥  
 ७—मणिरत्नवरप्रतिरूपः ॥ कान्चनरत्नवरप्रतिरूप इति ॥  
 ८—एते(ते)देव गन्धा एतानि पुष्पाण्येषु धूप, एतां मालां त्रिः प्रदक्षिणां कृत्वा, आदित्यकर्तितं सूतमिति  
 प्रतिसरमावधीयात् ॥६॥

(७)

- १—आदित्यकर्तितं सूत्रमिन्द्रेण त्रिवृतीकृतम् ।  
 अश्विभ्यां ग्रथितोग्रन्थैर्ब्रह्मणा प्रतिसरः कृतः ॥  
 २—धान्यं यशस्यमायुष्यमशुभस्य च घातनम् ।  
 बध्नामि प्रतिसरमिमं सर्वशत्रुनिवर्हणम् ॥  
 ३—रक्षोभ्यश्च पिशाचेभ्यो गन्धर्वेभ्यस्तथैव च ।  
 मनुष्येभ्यो भयं नाऽस्ति यच्चस्यादुष्कृतं कृतम् ॥  
 ४—स्वकृतात्परकृताच्च दुष्कृतात् प्रतिमुच्यते ।  
 सर्वस्मात्पातकान्मुक्तो भवेद्द्वीरस्तथैव च ॥  
 ५—अचिचाराच्य कृत्यातः स्त्रीकृतादशभं च यत् ।  
 तावत् तस्य भयं नाऽस्ति यावत्सूत्रं धारयेत् ॥  
 ६—यावदापश्च गावश्च यावत्स्थास्यन्ति पर्वता ।  
 तावत्तस्य भयं नाऽस्ति यः सूत्रं धारयिष्यतीति ॥  
 ७—अन्वायं मुक्त्वा देवं विसर्जयेत् ॥  
 प्रमदो नाम गन्धर्व प्रदोषो परिधावति ।  
 मुन्चं शैलमयात् पापान् मुंच-मुंच प्रमुंच च ॥  
 ८—(यावद्) इमा आपः पवनेन पूता हिरण्यवर्णा अनवद्यरूपाः ।  
 तावदिमं धूर्तं प्रवाहयामि प्रवाहितो मे देहिवरान् यथोक्तान् ॥



१—उदितेषु नक्षत्रेषु गृहान् प्रविष्टो गृहिणीं पश्येत्, धनवति धनं मे देहीति ॥

यद् भोक्तुं कामजातं जगत्यां मनसा समीहते तत्तद्विजन्मा पिनाकसेन यजमानात् काममुपभुक्तो,  
भुक्त्वाऽमृतत्वं तद्वदेवाऽभ्युपैति, तावदेवा भ्युपै (ती)ति ॥७॥

इति स्कन्दयागः समाप्तः ॥२०॥

प्रथमा विंशतिः समाप्ता ॥ एवं खाण्ड ॥१२४॥

### Summary of the Ritual

- I. Preparation for the Ceremony.
- II. 19—. Verses to accompany the *āvāhana*, or bringing in of the statue of the god.
- II. 10—III. 1. The seating of this statue.
- III. 2—3. Presentation to it of foot-water, perfumes, flowers etc.
- III. 4. Substances to be offered.
- III. 5. Kindling of the fire.
- IV. Mantras with which the oblation is made.
- V—VI. Additional prayers and ceremonies.
- VII. 1—6. Verses for the fastening on of an amulet.
- VII. 7—10. Dismissal of the god and after-ceremonies.
- VII. 11. The efficacy of the ceremony.

### English Translation :

Now from here will explain the Dhūrta-kalpa (Rogue-Scripture).

(1) Every four months, let him always perform it. On the morrow, on the sixth day, having made a fast, having gone forth in the northeast direction, in a clean place, pleasant, free from salt, having made a circle of thirteen cubits, in the middle of the circle having put a garland of the leaves of all trees, having put bells, banners, wreaths, and an amulet in the rear of the garland, having prepared looking-glasses in the middle there, with a couplets beginning "Whom white horses carry" let him cause (the Dhūrta) to be brought in.

(2) Whom white horses carry, ever-yoked, swift as thought, that Dhūrta, having white equipment, I cause to be brought in.

Whom elephants carry, lions and tigers also, and bulls, that Dhūrta, having lion-equipment, I cause to be brought in.

Whom peacocks carry, and partridges with variegated wings, that Dhūrta, having variegated equipment, I cause to be brought in.



Whom (animals) of all colours carry, always-yoked, swift as thought that Dhūrta, having equipment, I cause to be brought in.

Whose always is ever-unfailing Śakti associated with bells and banners, that Dhūrta, having Śakti-equipment, I cause to be brought in.

And the young man (Kumāra) who is ever constantly surrounded by companies of mothers, that Dhūrta, along with the mothers, I cause to be brought in.

And the great one who is ever surrounded by a thousand maidens, that Dhūrta, having lion-equipment, I cause to be brought in.

Let the god come, with a company, with an army, with a chariot, with followers, renowned, having six mouths and lips, ten eyes, a golden complexion, a brightness filled with that which is light.

Let my god Kārttikeya come, along with pious fathers and with mothers. With thy brother especially, moreover, do thou, having all forms, with thy attendants, be pleased with this offering.

Engage (in the offering) : with these words let him cause the god to engage.

(3) Do thou engage in the praise of choice bells, (where one is) spotless(?). Having engaged, give me long life, posterity, and cattle indeed, Vināyakasena. With the verse beginning '*imā āpaḥ*' let him give scented water for the feet. "Let the blessed god take the Dhūrta", he says, with just six verses. With the verses beginning '*hiranyavarṇāḥ*' and '*divyo gandharvaḥ* [let him present] perfumes ; with those beginning '*yas te gandhā, imaḥ sumanasah*', flowers ; with those beginning '*priyam dhātur, vanaspatir aso medhya*', incense ; with that beginning '*yakṣyena to divā gñiḥ śukraḥ*', a lamp ; with that beginning '*yo viśvataḥ supratika*', leaves. Having caused it to be wahsed, let him place upon the offering sour-milk-soup, milk-soup, rice-and-sugar, *mudga*-drink, mixed grain, and sweetmeats, all odours, all essences ; having rendered it full of water, full of root, full of flower, full of fruit, full of essence ; with the verse beginning '*indraḥ sītām*' having scratched (the ground) ; with the verse beginning '*agne prehi*' having brought forward and kindled the fire ; having arranged the fuel turned east, saying "O Bhaga", and the three verses beginning '*etām idhaman*' ; with the verse beginning '*sugārhapatya*' having arranged it ; with that beginning '*samidhho agniḥ*' let him consecrate the kindled (fire).

(4) With the six verses beginning '*bhadram ichantaḥ*', '*hiranyagarbhaḥ*', '*mamā'gne varcas*', '*tvayā manyo*', '*yas to manyo*', '*yad deva devahedanam*', then beginning with the *Kāmasūkta*, saying, "Hail to Mahīpati : to Dhūrta, to Skanda,



to Viśākha, to Pinākasena, to Bhrātrastrikāma, to the self-willed one, to him of choice bells, to the spotless, to him that has a red limb, to Śālakaṭaṅkaka, Hail!" with these words having made the offering, to Agni, to Prajāpati, and with the verse beginning '*ye devā divy ekādaśastha*', to Anumati, to Agni Saviṣṭa-kṛt.

(5) (The son) of Śiva, Agni, and the Kṛttikās, I will praise, the wish-granter, the beautiful ; let him that has all forms, having been prised, grant me all things.

Wealth, grain, herds, enjoyments let him grant me, speech and knowledge, male and female slaves as well, status, a jewel, a betel-nut tree.

Those who with piety, blessed one, worship the holy and honourable Dhūrta, may they all have wealth, offspring and honour.

As Indra, moreover, having gotten his wishes, satisfied moreover, blessed, of old, give me abundant rewards and of shares and of food especially.

With the *Kāmasūkta* let him offer the offering. This offering, O god, is presented to me for my portion ; having taken it according to rule, be not angry, but well pleased.

(6) The one born to-day I fall down before ; to the one born to-day indeed, a reverence. (I make no attempt to translate the latter half of the śloka).

With these words, a reverence (is made) to Bhava. "I bow down to the god Varada, I bow down to Skanda, I bow down before Kumāra". "To the son of the six Kṛttikās, having six mouths, the son of Agni," (is to be offered) the worship told by the *Gopatha*.

Whose are coloured blossoms, whose is coloured ointment, whose are cocks with coloured eyes, let that Skanda be pleased with me.

Some read (son) of Agni, son of Kṛttikās, son of Indra ; some (son) of Paśupati, of Rudra ; who thou art, that art thou ; reverence to be thee.

With these words a reverence (is made) to lord Śaṅkara, to the son of Agni. A reverence to the son of the Kṛttikās. The blessed one is everywhere inimitable, hail ! The blessed one is everywhere inimitable. He has the likeness of the choice of jewels. He has the likeness of the choice of golden jewels. With these words (let him offer ?) these *devagandhas*, these blossoms, this incense, this garland, having thrice made a turn to the right. With the couplets beginning "A string cut by the Ādityas" let him bind on an amulet.



(7) A string cut by the Ādityas, made a threefold amulet by Indra; a knot tied by the Aśvins, made a *pratisara* by Brahman.

Auspicious, honouring, preserving, and slaying what is unfortunate, I bind this *pratisara*, destroying all foes.

From both Rākṣasas, Piśācas, and Gandharvas likewise, from men there is no fear, and of what might be an evil deed.

From his own deed; and from another's deed, is he freed; from every sin set free would a man be likewise.

And what is unfortunate from magic, from a mean deed, from a woman's deed, of this there is no fear so long as he wears the sūtra.

So long as (there shall be) water and cattle, so long as the mountains shall stand, so long is there no fear for him who shall wear the sūtra.

With these words, having paid reverence, let him dismiss the god. The wicked Gandharva, Pramoda by name, runs around. Release from natural sin, release, release, and set free. These waters are begotten by purification, golden-coloured, of irreproachable beauty. Now I cause this Dhūrta to be carried forth; having been carried forth, give me my wishes as told. The lunar asterisms having risen, having entered the houses let him look at housewife, saying "O wealthy women, give me a gift." Whenever he desires in mind to enjoy a thing born of Kāma in the world, then the twice-born one, O Pinākasena, having enjoyed love from the sacrifice, immortality then, O god, he approaches—then, O god, he approaches.

Thus the *Skandayāga* is ended.

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PLATE I



a



b



c



d



e

Human figure.

a--e. From Punchmarked Coins. British Museum.







PLATE II



a



d



b



e



c



f

Deity figure.

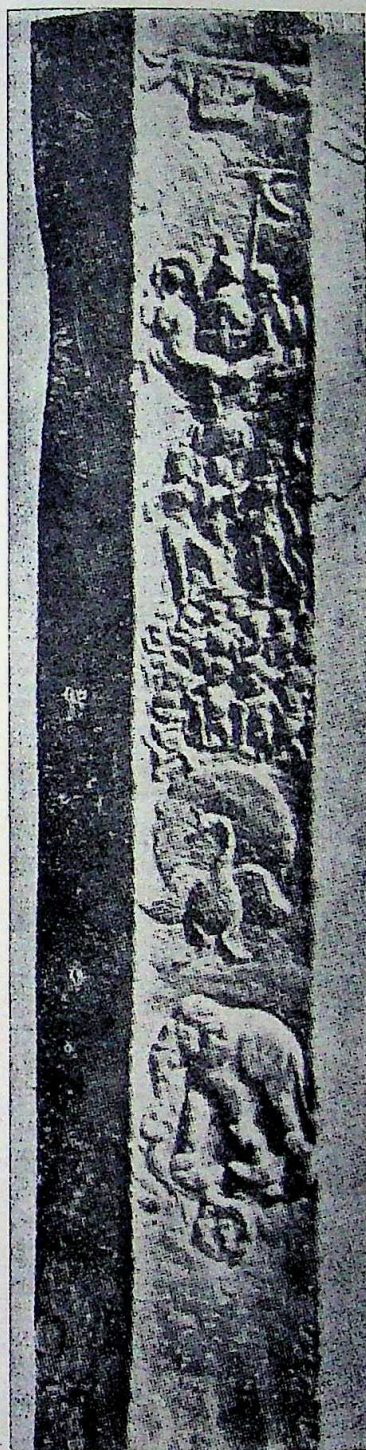
a—c. From Ujjayini Coins. d—f. From Yaudheya Coins. British Museum.







PLATE III



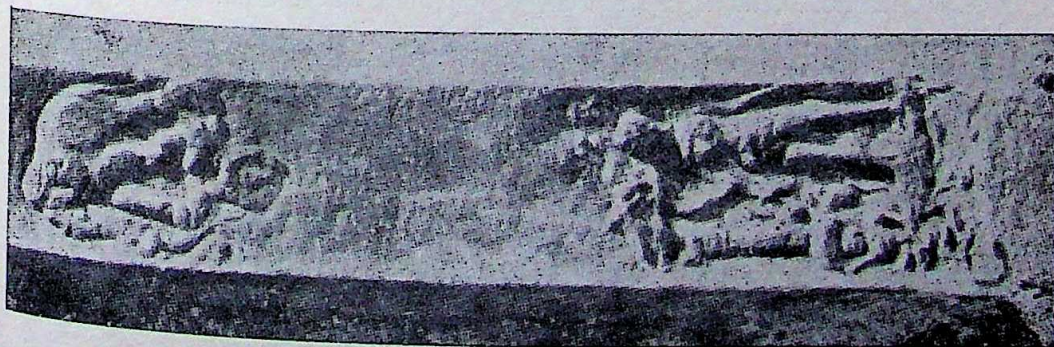
Lālā Bhagat Column.





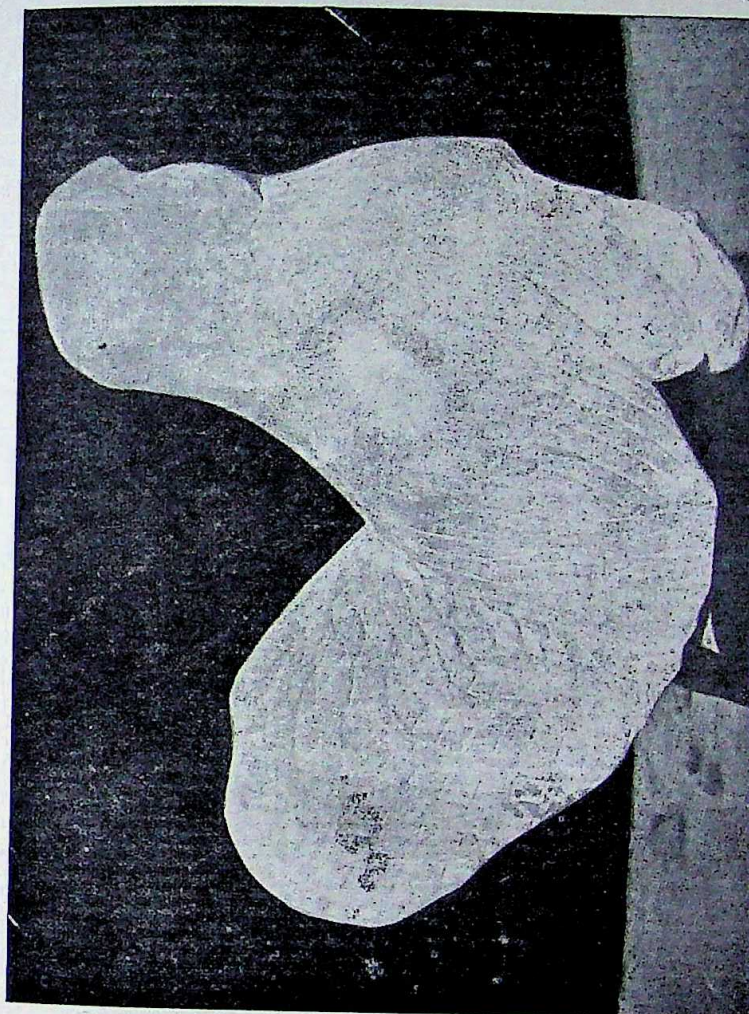


PLATE IV



a

a. Detail of the lower portion of Lālā Bhagat Column.



b

b. Side-view of the cock figure, once surmounting the *Kalkata-dhwaja*. Near Kānpur. 1st cent. B.C.









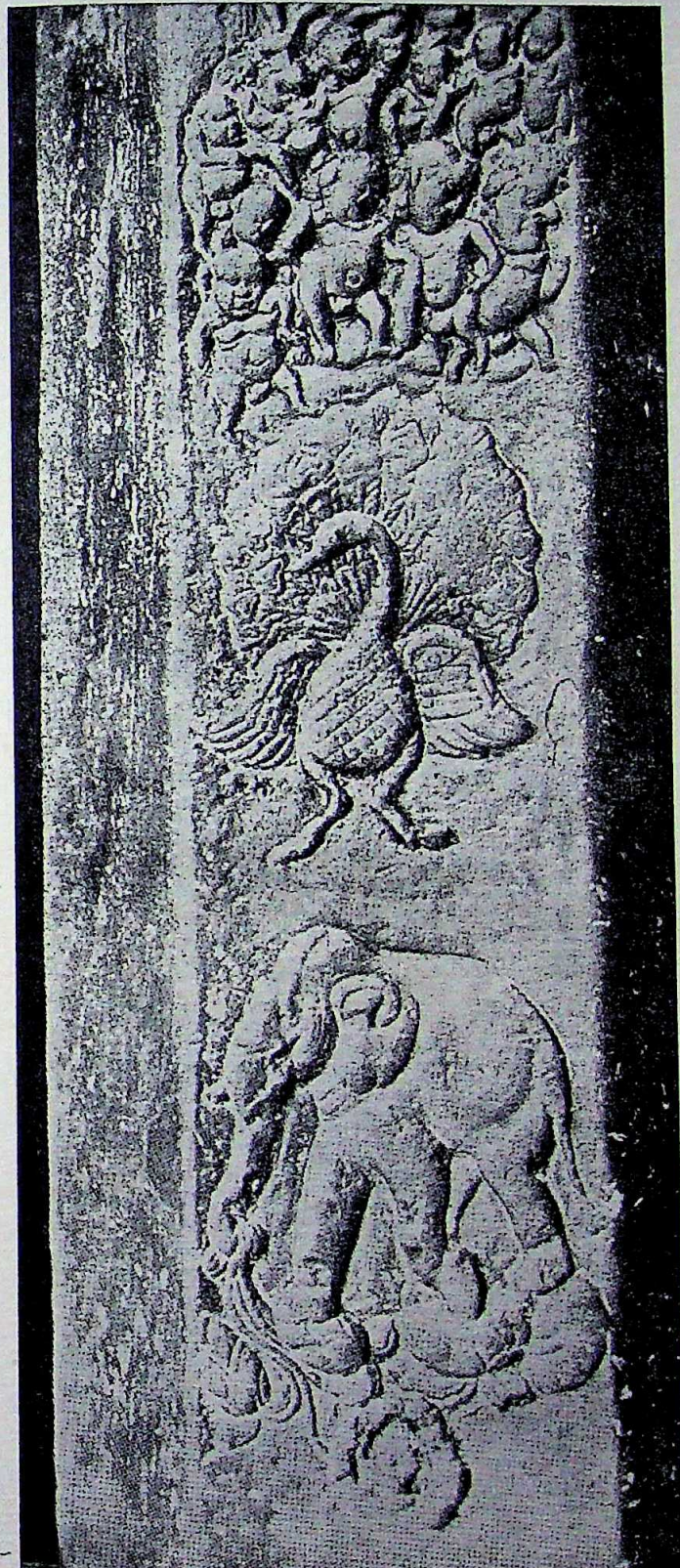
Upper portion of the Lala Bhagat Pillar. Near Kanpur.  
CC-0. Shri Vipin Kumar Col. Deoband. In Public Domain.







PLATE VI



Middle portion of the Jab Bhagat Pillar. Near Kanpur.  
Gift of the Government of India to the Government of Madhya Pradesh.









Skanda holding Śakti, 1st cent. A.D. Inscribed. Mathura Museum.  
CC-0. Shri Vipin Kumar Col. Deoband. In Public Domain.







PLATE VIII



a



b

Kārttikeya with spear. Kuṣāṇa. a. National Museum. b. Mathura Museum.

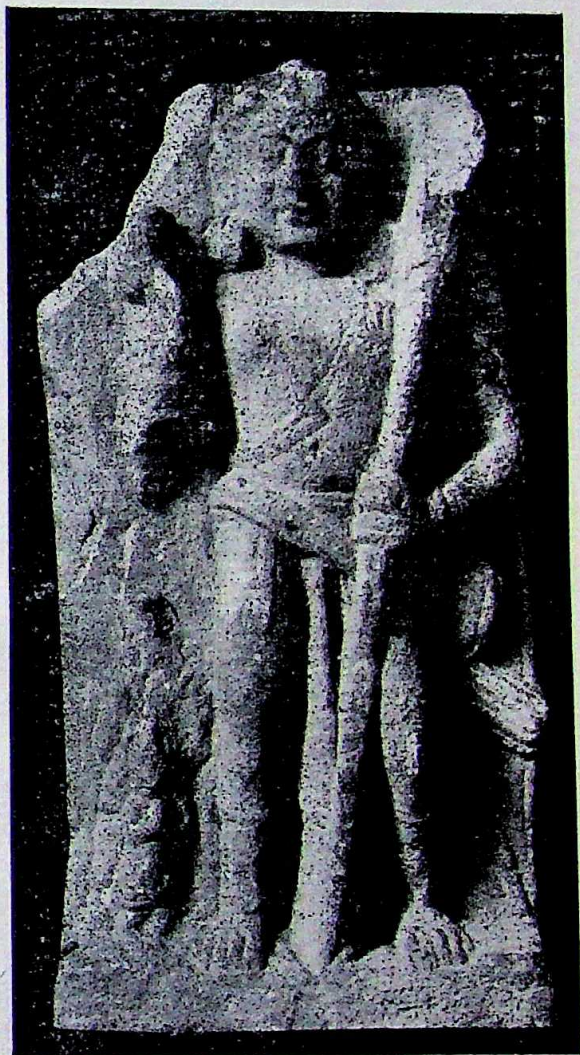








a



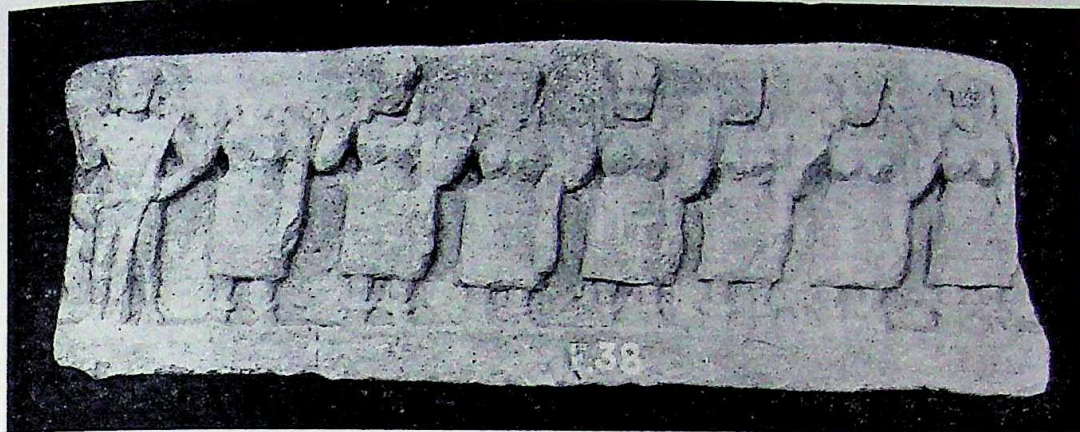
b

a--b. Deity with spear. Probably Śaktidhara Skanda, c. 2—3rd cent. Mathura Museum.









a



b

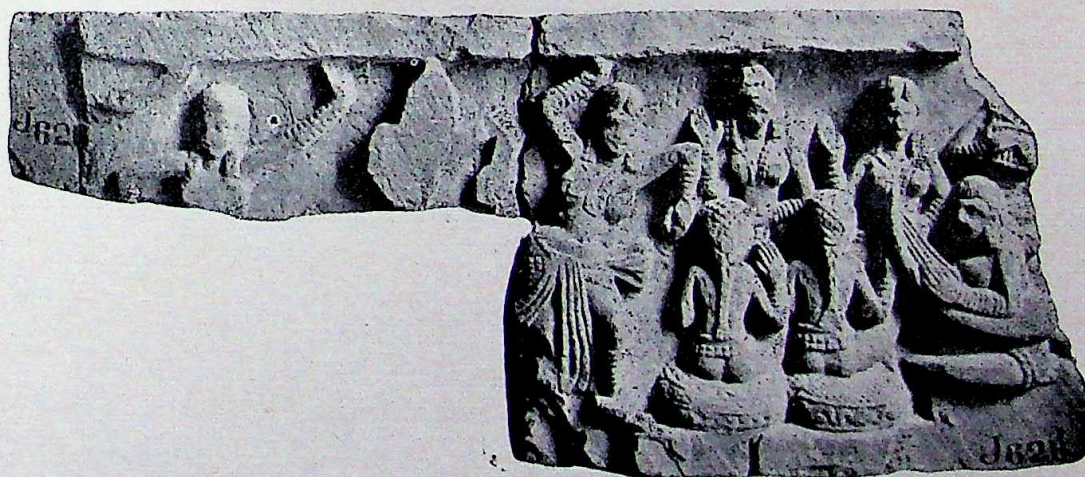
Mothers with spear-holding deity.

a. Early Kuṣāṇa. b. Late Kuṣāṇa. Mathura Museum.









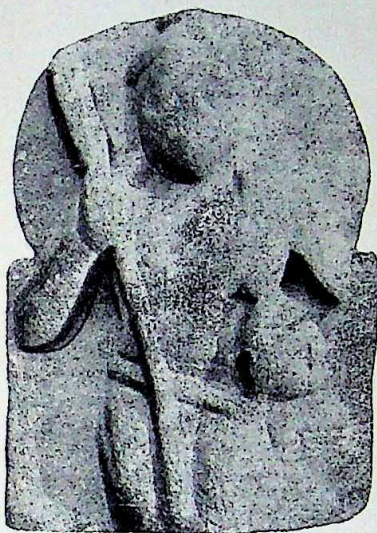
b

a—b. Worship of Nemesa. J 626, Lucknow Museum. a. Showing cult worship of the deity.  
 b. Showing an allied ceremony of music and dance. From Mathura, Kaṅkāli Tīlā. Inscribed.









a



b



c



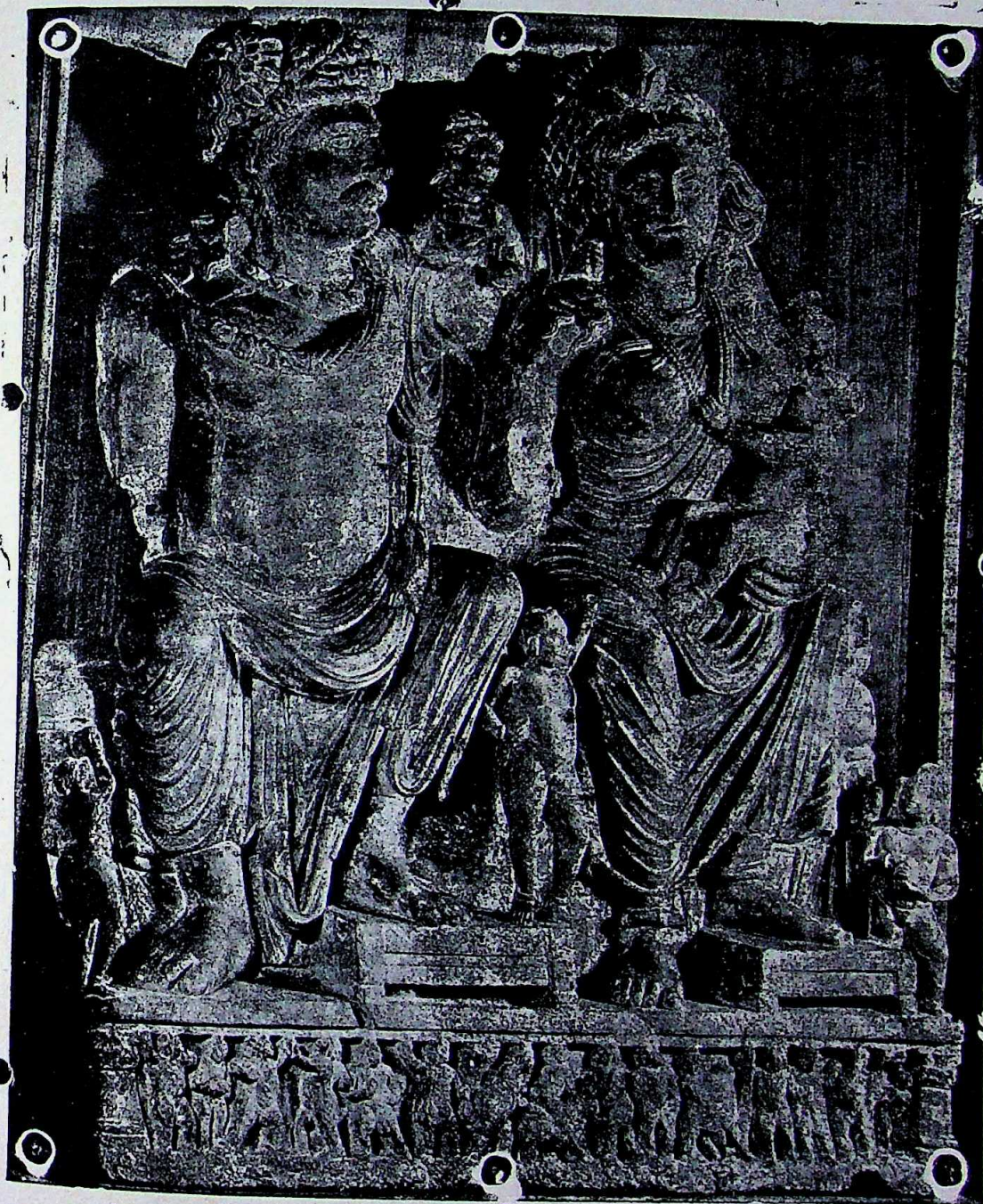
d

- a. Kārttikeya.    b. Negameṣa.  
c. Deity of child-birth.    d. Negameṣi. Kuṣāṇa and Gupta, from Mathura.









Pañcika and Hārītī with children.  
Gandhāra, Peshawar Museum. Kuṣāṇa.









Hārītī. Peshawar Musuem. Gandhāra. Kuṣāṇa.







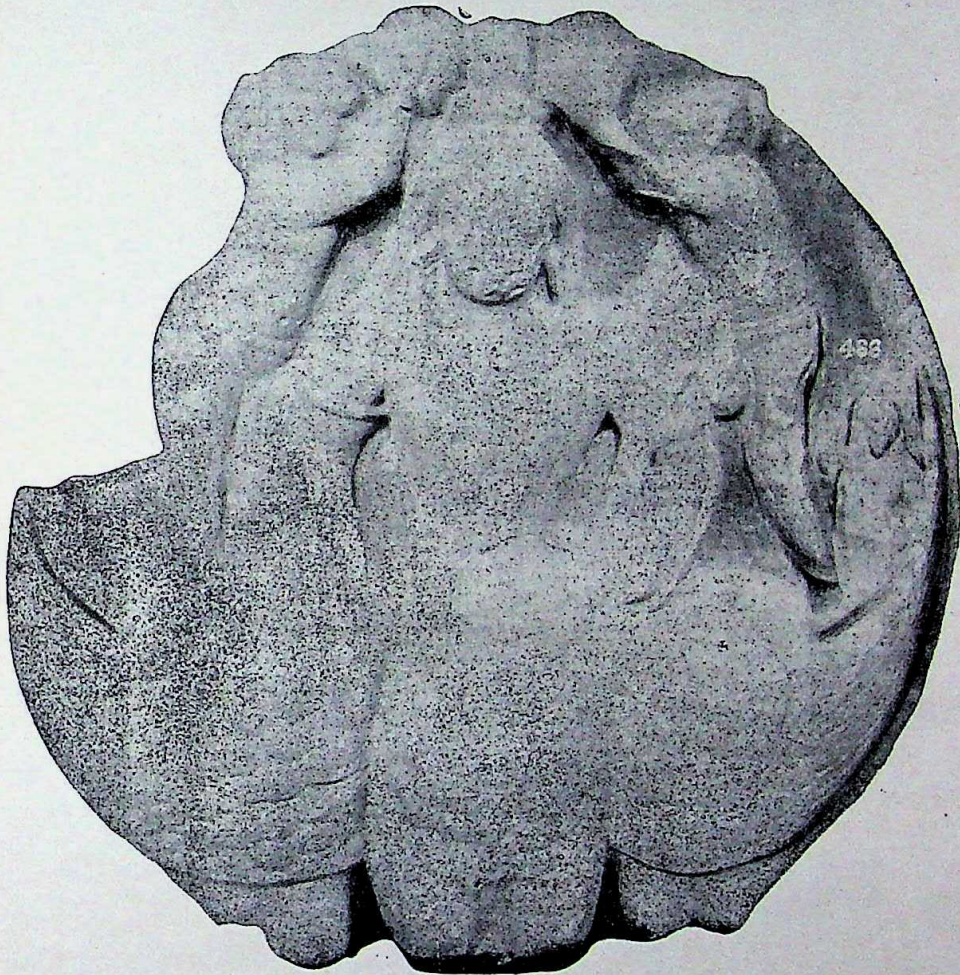


Hārītī. Lahore Museum. 2nd cent. A.D. Gandhāra.









The Consecration of Skanda by Brahmā and Śiva. Gupta. Mathura Museum.









a

a. Terracotta, Mathura Museum.



b

Śaktiḥana, Mayūravāhana Kārttikeya.

b. Stone, Bharat Kala Bhavan, Gupta.







PLATE XVIII



a



b

a. Skanda-Abhiṣeka. From Kanauj. C. 7-8 th cent. b. Pañcika or Kubera as war-god. Gandhāra.









a



b

- a. Standing Warrior God, from Gandhāra. In the British Museum.  
b. Seated Kārttikeya, from Shahabad, Now in the Patna Museum.









a



b

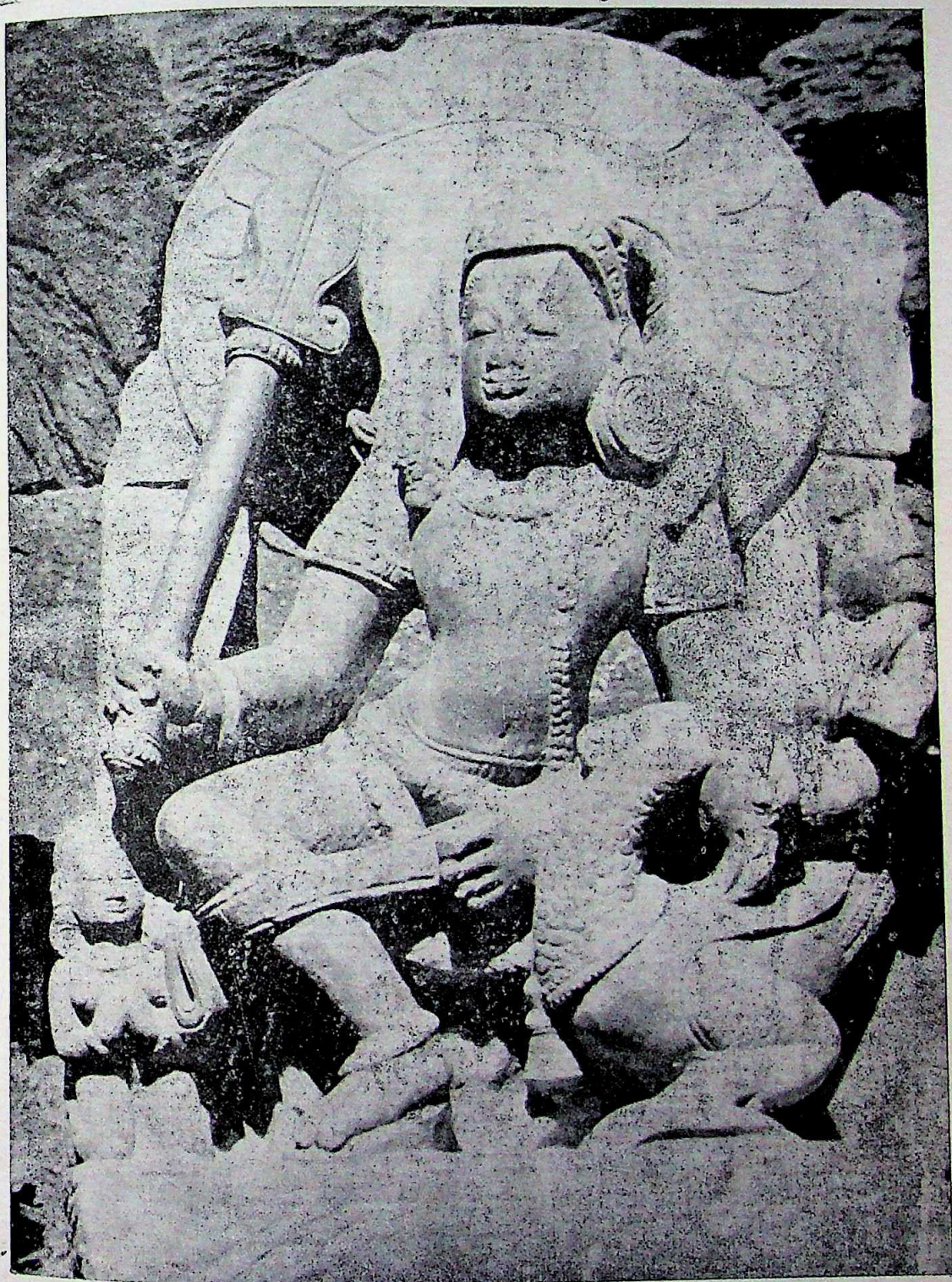


c









Skanda-Kārttikeya. From Basar, Garhwāl. 8-9th cent. Photo courtesy : Svāmī  
Pranavāndaji Mahārāja.









Kārttikeya as Brahma-teacher. Baijnath Museum. Courtesy : as Pl. XXI.











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